SHOBERL NATURAL HISTORY OF BIRDS.

THE

LADY SPENCER-CHURCHILL

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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NATURAL HISTORY

OF

BIRDS.

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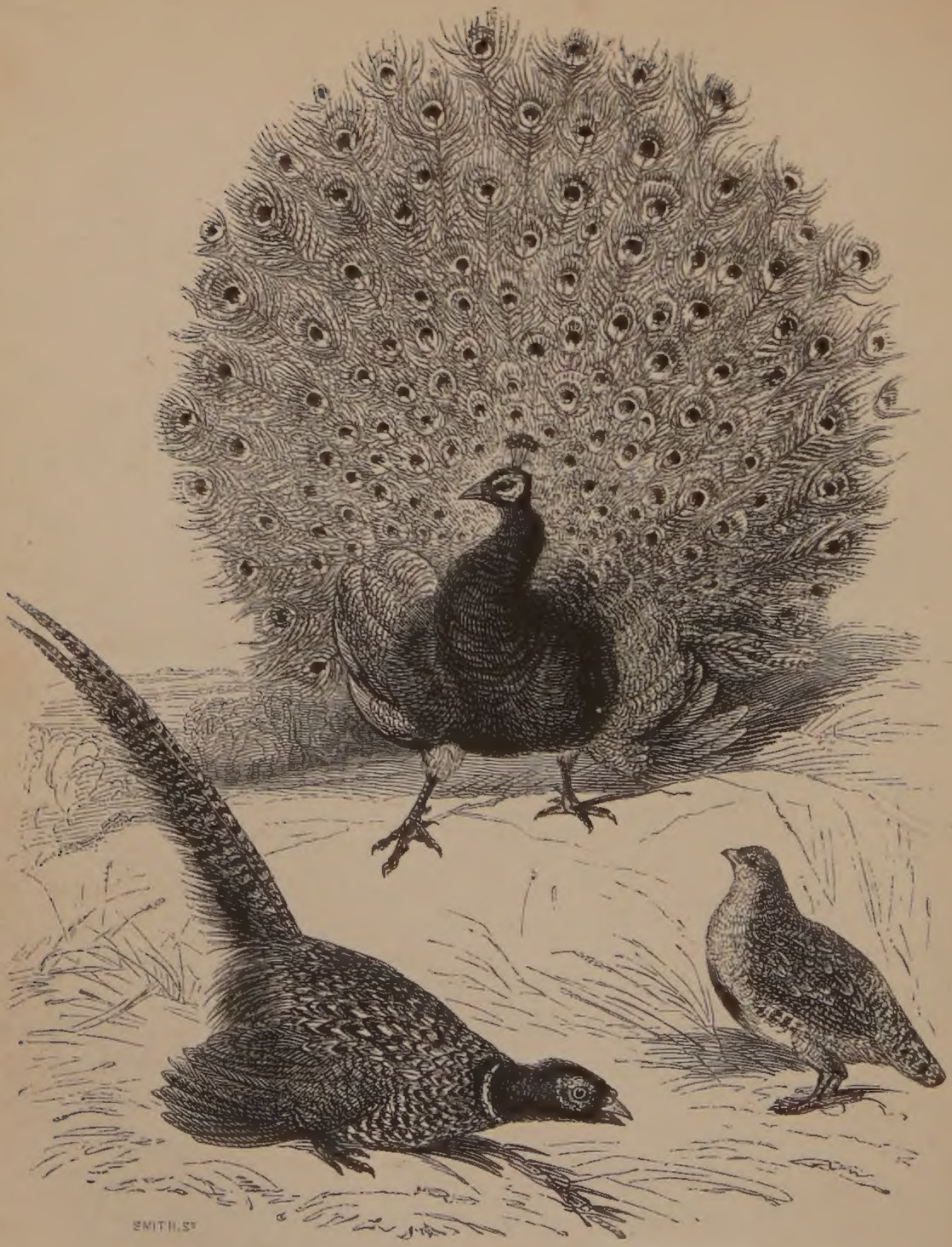

PHEASANT. PEACOCK. PARTRIDGE.

THE

NATURAL HISTORY OF BIRDS.

BY

FREDERIC SHOBERL.

WITH ENGRAVINGS FROM DRAWINGS BY

THOMAS LANDSEER.

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INTRODUCTION.

QUADRUPEDS, living on the earth like man, and in a great measure on the same kinds of food, bear a considerable resemblance to him in their general conformation; but birds in their structure are totally different from both. Instead of possessing those characteristics of strength observable in most of the four-footed animals, the feathered tribes seem peculiarly formed for swiftness of motion, and every part of their frame proves the completeness of their mechanism. The pointed beak, the long and pliant neck, the gently swelling shoulder, the expansive wings, the tapering tail, the light

and bony feet, are all admirably adapted to cleave the air and facilitate their progress through it. Every part is formed for lightness and buoyancy. The position of their feathers, pointing backward, and laid over one another in exact and regular order, not only enables them to glide along with ease, but serves, together with the light down next to their bodies, to protect them from the intense cold of the atmosphere in winter. Their wings, though composed of the lightest materials, are furnished with such a degree of power as to impel their bodies forward with astonishing rapidity; while the tail performs the office of a rudder in regulating their course.

In all birds the eye is peculiarly calculated for distant vision, and the ear for accurate and quick perception: their sense of smelling also is extremely acute. In the land-birds, the structure of the feet affords them perfect security when perched upon trees; while the toes

of water-fowl are joined by a tough skin to assist them in swimming, and thus to fit them for the element in which Nature has destined them chiefly to live.

If the external structure of birds is wonderfully adapted to their peculiar functions and habits of life, the internal is not less suited to the same purposes. All the bones are light and thin, as well as all the muscles, excepting those which perform the movements of the wings. The air which is received into the lungs passes through them into a number of membranous cells; these in some species of birds are continued down the wings, and extended even to the pinions and the thigh-bones, which by inhalation they can fill with air at pleasure. This almost universal diffusion of air in the bodies of birds not only renders them more buoyant, and assists them in their long and laborious flights, but also prevents their respiration from being stopped by the rapidity of their motion through

the air. This peculiarity has been found to appertain, in a more eminent degree, to eagles and other birds of the highest and longest flight; while the ostrich, though it does not fly, yet has the same occasion for a similar supply of air, from the extreme velocity with which it runs. Were it possible for man to move with the swiftness of the swallow, the resistance of the air would soon produce suffocation, for want of those internal reservoirs with which birds are provided.

Birds, like quadrupeds, may be divided into two classes, carnivorous and granivorous; though there are some which partake of the nature of both. The carnivorous kinds are distinguished by the length of their wings, and the strength of the muscles by which they are moved; so that they are enabled to keep long on the wing in search of prey. They have large heads, strong hooked bills, short necks, brawny thighs, formidable claws, and a sight

so acute as to enable them to discover their prey from immense heights in the air, whence they dart down upon it with astonishing velocity and undeviating aim. Such of them as feed on carrion have the sense of smelling so keen that they can scent carcases at prodigious distances. Like the carnivorous quadrupeds, they have but one stomach; and their intestines are much shorter than those of the granivorous birds. In disposition also there is a striking analogy between birds and beasts of prey. Their manners are fierce and unsocial, and they seldom congregate like the inoffensive granivorous tribes; but, when not on the wing, rapacious birds resort to the summits of sequestered rocks, or to the depths of extensive forests, where they abide in gloomy solitude.

The granivorous birds have, in addition to the first stomach, or craw, a second stomach, by which their food is transmitted into the gizzard, or true stomach, consisting of two very

strong muscles, where the food is completely prepared for digestion. Such is the strength of this organ, that it has been proved by many curious experiments to possess the power of breaking and digesting glass, tin, and iron, even in the form of needles and lancets. Hence it may be inferred that the stones commonly found in the stomachs of domestic poultry assist in grinding the grain and other hard substances which constitute their food. The granivorous birds, like those quadrupeds which feed on herbage, are gentle, inoffensive, and social. As they may be for the most part easily domesticated, man has availed himself of their tractable disposition, and selected for his own advantage such as are most prolific and profitable. The principal of these are the hen, the goose, the duck, the turkey, and the pigeon, which furnish us with a store of wholesome and savoury food.

Many species of birds remove at particular

seasons from one country to another, sometimes very far distant, partly for the sake of a suitable temperature of air, partly to seek a convenient situation for breeding and rearing their young, and partly to procure the necessary supplies of food. Such birds only as migrate to great distances are called birds of passage: but few species are absolutely stationary, removing from one district to another, from the interior of the country to the sea-coast, or the reverse. The seasons of these migrations are observed with exquisite order and punctuality; and the immense flocks take their departure with a secrecy, and re-appear with a suddenness, not easily explained. If it be asked how they know the time to commence their migrations, and in what manner to direct their course, it may with great propriety be answered, that the same Power which bestowed reason on us, has given instinct to them. Changes in the atmosphere may indicate the

proper time for removal; and it is also to be observed that their course is rather determined by the weather than by the situation of countries; and that they pass from a colder to a warmer climate, or the reverse, as the state of the air and their own feelings give the impulse and direction.

Many of the small granivorous birds, both migratory and residents, not only delight the eye by the variety and beauty of their plumage and the vivacity of their movements, but charm the ear by the melody of their peculiar notes, which we call song. From numerous experiments, it appears that these notes are altogether acquired, and no more natural to birds than language is to man. The attempt of a young bird to sing, may be compared with the imperfect endeavour of a child to talk. The first essay seems not to possess the slightest rudiments of the future song; but, as the bird grows older and stronger, it becomes less

difficult to perceive its aim. While the scholar is thus striving to form his song, when he is once sure of a passage, he commonly raises his tone, which he drops again when he is not equal to what he is attempting. Some curious and well-authenticated facts recorded by the Hon. Daines Barrington, seem to prove that the language of those with whom they are placed when very young, will be the language which they adopt in after-life. It may, however, appear extraordinary, that when in a wild state they adhere so steadily to the song of their own species only, while so many others are to be heard all around them; but this arises from the attention paid by the young to the notes of their parents alone, and their disregard of all the rest.

Such are the notions adopted by naturalists of deserved celebrity; but Rennie, who, in his entertaining volumes on the "Architecture and Habits of Birds," has not only recorded many

original observations, but corrected the errors of preceding writers, tells us, that, from many years' attention to the subject, he has come to the conclusion, that the singing of birds may be referred to hilarity and joy, or to rivalry and defiance, rather than to imitation or love, to which they have been attributed. In general, the male birds are distinguished from the females by the faculty of song: hence some have assumed that the females never sing, but many exceptions are recorded.

Most birds, at certain seasons, live together in pairs: the union is formed in spring, and continues while the efforts of both are required to construct their temporary habitations and to rear their offspring. The nests of birds are in general formed with such exquisite art, that it would baffle human ingenuity to imitate them. Both male and female generally assist in this labour. Their mode of building, the materials which they employ, as well as the

situations they select, vary with the different species of birds, and are all admirably adapted to their respective wants and circumstances: but birds of the same species, whatever region of the globe they inhabit, collect the same kind of materials, arrange them in the same manner, and make choice of similar situations for their temporary abodes. Sticks, moss, straws, dry grass, often mixed with clay, form the foundation and exterior, which usually bears so great a resemblance in colour to the surrounding foliage or branches, as not easily to be discovered even by persons who are in search of them: while moss, wool, fine hair, and the softest down of animals and vegetables, line the inside of these commodious dwellings. Here the female lays her eggs, varying in number with the different species, on which she patiently sits, sometimes relieved occasionally by the male, till the young burst forth from the shell. From this time the parent

birds lead a life of incessant labour for the support of their offspring, till the latter have acquired sufficient strength to provide their own subsistence.

Most birds attain their full size in a few months. In proportion to the dimensions of their bodies, they live longer than either man or quadrupeds. Though it is difficult to ascertain the age of birds, yet there are instances of great longevity in many of them. Geese, swans, ravens, and eagles, for example, have been known to live to seventy, eighty, and even one hundred years.

All birds moult or cast their feathers once, and some twice, in the course of a year. This change takes place in autumn, or in the season corresponding with it in different climates, and uniformly after the breeding season. Those which moult twice a year, change their feathers also in spring. Some birds do not acquire their proper colours till after the first

moulting, others not before the end of the second or even of the third year.

No northern country, perhaps, produces so great a variety of birds as the British Islands, owing to the various condition of our lands, from the highest state of cultivation to the wild, mountainous, and woody. The abundance of berries and wild fruit offered by our hedges, heaths, and plantations, attracts great numbers of small birds, and birds of prey in consequence; while our shores, and the numerous little islands adjacent to them, afford shelter and protection to vast multitudes of almost all kinds of water-fowl. The last edition of Bewick's "British Birds" enumerates 335 species, of which 167 are land-birds, and 168 water-birds, as resident in or annually visiting this country; but it is true that a few of the species admitted into that pleasing work are rarely met with.

Most of these, with the exception of the

rapacious birds, are not only directly beneficial to man, inasmuch as their flesh and eggs contribute to supply him with food, but indirectly they render him still more important services. But for their incessant pursuit of the insects, on which numbers of them almost wholly subsist, vegetation would be destroyed by the ravages of those diminutive plunderers—nay, the very air would soon be rendered unfit to breathe from their multitude. Others, again, assist the labours of the husbandman, by clearing the earth of the seeds of noxious plants; and if, for these benefits, they claim a share of the produce of our fields and gardens, let us not ungratefully grudge them that small return.

According to the system of Nature adopted by Linneus, the class of birds is divided into six orders :—

1. *Accipitres,* or hawks; including all the

birds of prey, the eagles, hawks, owls, and shrikes.

2. *Picæ*, pies; to which belong the raven, crow, rook, magpie, jay, cuckoo, woodpecker, kingfisher, hoopoe, &c.

3. *Anseres*, geese; including the different species of swans, geese, ducks, gulls, &c. with webbed feet.

4. *Grallæ*, waders; water-birds with long naked legs, as the crane, heron, stork, curlew, woodcock, snipe, sandpiper, plover, &c.

5. *Gallinæ*, poultry; comprehending the peacock, pheasant, common domestic fowl, partridge, grouse, &c.

6. *Passeres*, sparrows; including the pigeon, the sparrow, the swallow, and all the numerous families of the singing birds.

The more recent distribution of Cuvier, the eminent French naturalist, likewise gives six orders:—Birds of prey; climbers; gallina-

ceous birds; the passerine; waders; and swimmers; nearly corresponding with the Linnean arrangement.

In this volume, which makes no pretensions to system, the more obvious division into Resident Birds, Summer Visiters, Winter Visiters, and Water Birds, has been adopted.

RESIDENT BIRDS.

Besides the birds of prey, the eagles, the falcons, the owls, and the shrikes, there are about thirty hard-billed birds,—that is, such whose bills enable them to subsist on hard seeds, nuts, and berries; and five or six soft-billed ones,—that is, such as subsist almost exclusively on worms, insects, and the like, who constantly sojourn with us. These are divided into different families, distinguished chiefly by the formation of the beak; as the thrushes, grosbeaks, buntings, finches, larks, titmice, sparrows, wrens, &c. Among the resident birds we have also to class the Pie family, including the raven, the rook, the jay, the woodpecker, and the nuthatch; and the gallinaceous tribe, comprehending all the tenants of the poultry-yard, as well as the bustard, pheasant, partridge, and grouse.

EAGLE.

The eagles are the largest and most powerful of the different families composing the order of birds of prey. They are found in all parts of the world, from the frigid to the torrid zone, but fortunately they are not very common in the British Islands.

The Golden Eagle is the largest of all the feathered tyrants of this race, and has obtained among birds the same pre-eminence which the lion is allowed to possess among quadrupeds. From the point of the bill to the extremity of the tail it measures more than three feet; and, when the wings are extended, about eight in breadth. The weight of the female is from sixteen to eighteen pounds; but the male, which is smaller, as in all the species of rapacious birds, does not commonly exceed twelve pounds. The general colour of the Golden

FALCON.

EAGLE.

KITE.

SHRIKE, or
BUTCHER BIRD

Eagle is a deep brown, mixed with tawny on the head and neck. The eye, remarkably keen and penetrating, is deep sunk, and covered by a projecting brow; and the iris, being of a fine bright yellow, shines with extraordinary lustre. The tail is black and spotted with ash colour; the legs are yellow, and feathered down to the toes; and the claws are remarkably large and strong.

Eagles are rarely met with excepting in the mountainous and thinly-peopled districts of our islands, where they build and breed among the loftiest cliffs. They live together in pairs, and their attachment usually lasts for life.

The nests constructed by birds of the rapacious tribes are in general rude, and composed of coarse materials, as dried twigs, bents, and the like; but they are often lined with soft substances. They build on elevated rocks, in ruined castles and towers, and in other solitary places. The aëry, or nest, of the eagle is quite

flat, and not hollow like those of other birds. The male and female commonly place their nests between two rocks, in a dry and inaccessible situation. It is said that the same nest serves the eagle during life.

The eagle lays three and sometimes four eggs, of which it seldom happens that more than two are hatched.

All the species of eagles are said to be equally assiduous in supplying their young with abundance of food; for which purpose they carry off lambs, kids, and all kinds of game, and frequently animals of considerable size, and even young children. The following circumstance, which occurred in the Orkneys, is recorded by Sir Robert Sibbald:—An eagle seized a child a year old, which its mother had left wrapped up in some clothes, while she went for a few moments to gather sticks for firewood, and carried it a distance of four miles to Hoia; which being known from the cries of the mo-

ther, four men went there in a boat, and, knowing where the nest was, found the child unhurt and untouched. Anderson, in his History of Iceland, relates that instances have there been known of children four or five years old being carried off by eagles.

In the county of Kerry, in Ireland, during a summer when the scarcity of provisions amounted almost to a famine, a poor man obtained a plentiful subsistence for his family out of an eagle's nest, by regularly robbing the young eagles of part of the food provided for them by the parent birds; having hit upon the ingenious expedient of protracting their assiduity beyond the usual time by clipping the wings and thus retarding the flight of the young, and having luckily escaped being surprised by the old ones while committing these depredations. How fatal such a surprise might have proved, may be inferred from a circumstance which happened in the same county. A labouring

man, having resolved to rob the nest of a pair of eagles, built on a small island in the Lake of Killarney, stripped and swam to the island in the absence of the parent birds. Having secured the young, which he had tied in a string, he was preparing to swim back with them; but, when up to the chin in water, the old birds returned, fell upon the robber, and, in spite of his resistance, continued their attacks till they despatched him with their beaks and claws.

Though a voracious bird, the eagle can endure hunger for a long time. One of them has been known to live twenty-one days without any kind of sustenance, through the carelessness of the servants of the person to whom it belonged. A still more extraordinary instance is related by Buffon, who was assured by a person of veracity, that one of these birds, being caught in a fox-trap, lived five weeks without any sort of food. It showed no symptoms of languor till the last eight days; and it was

ultimately killed to put an end to its sufferings.—The eagle is as remarkable for longevity as abstinence, and has frequently been known to live one hundred years.

There are many varieties of this formidable tribe of birds; as the ring-tailed eagle, the common eagle, the bald eagle, the white eagle, the rough-footed eagle, the black eagle, the osprey, the sea-eagle, and the crowned eagle. These and several others form different gradations in this ferocious family; but they have all the same general form, the same rapacity, and the same habits.

PEREGRINE FALCON.

The Peregrine or Passenger Falcon is about eighteen inches in length, three feet six inches in breadth, and weighs about two pounds and a quarter. The bill, of a pale blue, tipped with

black, is short, strong, and much notched. The eyes are dark, with yellow orbits. The head, the back of the neck, and the cheeks are brownish black; and a stripe of that colour runs from the base of the bill down each side of the throat. The upper plumage is dingy bluish ash, more or less clouded and barred with dark brown, and the shaft of each feather is black. The external wing appears at a first glance to be of a uniform plain dark ash-coloured brown; but on a closer inspection, the whole is found to be barred with darker spots and tipped with a dull white. The tail and tail-coverts are more distinctly barred and tipped in the same manner. The under parts of the plumage are a pale clay colour, plain on the front of the neck, but towards the breast marked with very small scratches of black, and the breast with roundish black spots. The sides, belly, and insides of the wings are dull white beautifully barred with dark brown. The thighs are long,

and marked with small heart-shaped spots; the legs and toes short, strong, and yellow, and the claws black.

In ancient times, several species of falcons were trained to assist in the sports of the field, and to fly at game both winged and four-footed. In those days, indeed, persons of distinction rarely stirred abroad without a hawk on the hand; and ladies themselves joined in this kind of sport. Such was the value of these birds, that in the reign of Edward III. it was made felony to steal a hawk; and taking its eggs, even in a person's own grounds, was punished with imprisonment for a year and a day and a fine at the king's pleasure. The expense which attended hawking was so great, that this kind of sport was confined to princes and persons of the highest rank or greatest wealth. We are told that in the reign of James I. Sir Thomas Monson gave one thousand pounds for a cast of hawks.

Besides the Peregrine Falcon, several others of this family were formerly held in high estimation for field-sports. These were principally the jer-falcon, the lanner, the hobby, the kestrel, and the merlin, which are called the long-winged hawks, to distinguish them from the gos-hawk, the sparrow-hawk, the kite, and the buzzard, which are shorter-winged, slower in their motions, more indolent, and less courageous than the others.

This diversion is now wholly abandoned, owing to the inclosure of lands, and their high state of cultivation, which forbid the pursuits of the falconer, who requires an extensive range, where he may follow his game without obstacle to himself or injury to his neighbour.

KITE.

The Kite is easily distinguished from all the other species of the falcon tribe by its forked tail. It is about two feet in length. The bill, of a horn colour, is furnished with bristles at the base. The eyes are yellow. The head and neck feathers are long and narrow, of a hoary colour, and have a brown streak down the middle of each: those on the body are reddish brown; the margin of each feather is pale. The quills are dark brown, the legs yellow, and the claws black.

This bird inhabits most parts of Europe, and is found in very high northern latitudes, whence it repairs in great numbers before winter towards Egypt, where it is said to breed. It returns in April to Europe, where it breeds a second time, in which respect it differs from the rapacious birds in general. In England it

is a constant resident, laying two or three eggs of a roundish form, and of a light colour, spotted with pale yellow.

Though the Kite weighs less than three pounds, it measures more than five feet across the outstretched wings. Its flight is rapid, and it frequently ascends beyond the reach of sight, descending upon its prey with prodigious force. Small quadrupeds and birds are the principal objects of its attack; but, though particularly fond of young chickens, the fury of the mother is generally sufficient to put the robber to flight.

SHRIKE, OR BUTCHER-BIRD.

The Shrike family belong to the rapacious birds. Though small and delicately-shaped, yet their courage, their appetite for blood, and their strong hooked bill, entitle them to rank

with the boldest and most sanguinary of the birds of prey. They are so courageous that they will attack birds much larger and stronger than themselves, such as the crow, the magpie, and the smaller species of hawks: should any of these approach the place of their retreat, they dart upon it with loud cries, and chase away the intruder. Shrikes will chase all the small birds upon the wing, and sometimes attack partridges and young hares.

The ash-coloured shrike, or the greater butcher-bird, is the largest of the three species of shrikes found in Britain. It is about ten inches in length. Its bill is black, furnished with bristles at the base. The upper parts of the plumage are a pale blue ash colour; the under parts white. The eye is placed in the middle of a broad black stripe. The larger quill feathers are black with a large white spot at the base, forming a bar of that colour across the wing; the smaller quills are white at the tips.

The two middle feathers of the tail are black; the next on each side are white at the ends; that colour gradually increases to the outermost, which are nearly all white; the whole forming, when the tail is spread, a large oval black spot. The legs are black. The female, which differs but little from the male, lays six eggs, of a dull olive green, spotted at the end with black.

This bird frequents mountainous wilds, in preference to the more cultivated parts of the country. It preys upon small birds, which it seizes by the throat, and, when it has strangled them, it fixes them upon a sharp thorn, and then tears them in pieces at leisure with its bill. This habit of the butcher-bird, from which he derives his name, though doubted by some, is confirmed by testimony that cannot be questioned. Mr. Selby, an eminent living naturalist, says: "I had the gratification to witness this operation of the shrike upon a

RAVEN. OWL. ROOK.

HOOPOE.

hedge-chanter. After killing the bird, it hovered with it in its bill for a short time over the hedge, apparently occupied in selecting a thorn for its purpose. Upon disturbing it and advancing to the spot, I found the chanter firmly fixed by the tendons of the wing at the selected twig."

OWL.

We have five or six species of owls, some of which are migratory, but others remain with us the whole year. The owls are distinguished from other birds of prey by peculiar and striking characteristics. The eyes are large, and surrounded with a radiated circle of feathers, of which the eye itself is the centre; the beak and talons are strong and crooked; the body is very short, but thick and well covered with the softest and most delicate plumage;

the external edges of the outer quill feathers are in general finely fringed, which contributes greatly to the smoothness and facility of their flight. They are generally divided into two kinds,—those which have ears, or horns, as they have been called, and such as have not that appendage; which, in fact, consists of a small tuft of feathers standing up like ears on each side of the head. This tuft the bird can erect or depress at pleasure; and, in all probability, it is of use in directing the organs of hearing, which are very large.

The eyes of owls, like those of cats, are so formed as to distinguish objects better in the dusk than in broad daylight. Unable, therefore, to bear the brighter light of the sun, these birds retire to lonely retreats, old towers or walls, or ivy-covered trees, where they pass the day in silence and obscurity; but at the approach of evening they venture forth in quest of prey, such as small birds, young hares

and rabbits, mice and lizards. If forced from its lurking place during the day, the owl flies but a short distance at once; and he is generally pursued by a train of small birds, which annoy him as much as possible.

The White (called by Bewick, the Yellow) Owl is often seen in the most populous towns, lurking during the day about churches, malt-houses, and other uninhabited or ruined buildings, and sallying forth in the twilight in quest of prey. It is this species that has obtained the name of Screech Owl, the cries of which are regarded by the superstitious as foreboding death or misfortune. The circumstance which has caused this bird to be accounted the herald of calamity may have arisen from its propensity to approach a window where it sees a light at a late hour. As the Screech Owl prowls about in the dead of the night, and lights are then generally kept burning in the chambers of the sick, it is no wonder that, in places

where these birds are numerous, they should sometimes, attracted by the light, have approached the windows, and, in consequence of fright or surprise, uttered those screams which are their natural language. These harsh sounds, suddenly breaking the solemn stillness of night, would be very apt to terrify a timid invalid or an ignorant nurse; and from this source, more especially in case the patient's sickness proved mortal, might easily be derived all the absurd notions which have prevailed concerning the ominous nature of the Screech Owl.

When asleep, the White Owl snores and hisses in a tremendous manner. "I have known," says White, "a whole village up in arms on such an occasion, imagining the churchyard to be full of goblins and spectres."

The Owl, if undisturbed, frequents the same place a long time. Jesse, in his Gleanings in Natural History, makes mention of one which

had been used to inhabit a hole in the wall of a house. The house being repaired, this hole was stopped up; but the owl became in consequence so clamorous, that the inhabitants had no peace till the hole was again opened. In such holes it deposits its eggs, for it makes no nest, and lays five or six of a whitish colour.

The Owl swallows whole the mice and small birds on which it preys, and throws up from its mouth the bones, feathers, and other indigestible parts, in the form of small round cakes or pellets, which are often found in the empty buildings that it frequents. White relates that an old hollow tree, the habitation of successive generations of owls, being taken down, several bushels of these pellets were found in it.

The White Owl becomes extremely tame when taken young. Montagu informs us that he "bred up one with a sparrow-hawk and a ringdove, who were confined together and lived in great harmony; but the latter was

the most quarrelsome, and was master of the triumvirate."

The common Brown or Wood Owl is of about the same size as the White, which it also resembles in its habits, except that it takes up its abode in some hollow tree or thickly matted ivy-bush. It is this owl that hoots by night, and when disturbed in its slumbers utters the melancholy but by no means unpleasing cry of hoo—hoo—oo—oo.

Slaney, in his Outline of British Birds, benevolently remarks that the owl, if domesticated, might become a valuable assistant to the husbandman. "If there were one or two belonging to every rick-yard and barn, they would well repay a little trouble, and would be at work when others sleep. The habit of taming birds or other animals is of no little use in forming kind and patient dispositions in the young."

RAVEN.

The Raven is the largest of the birds of the Pie kind, being above two feet in length and four in breadth. It has a strong bill, thick at the base, and covered for above half its length with strong hairs or bristles. The general colour of the upper parts is a fine glossy black, reflecting a blue tint in particular lights; the under parts are duller and of a dusky hue.

The Raven is well known in all the countries of the world: it was regarded by the ancients and by the ignorant in the dark ages as a bird of ill omen, whose appearance and croaking betokened approaching calamities. It builds early in the spring in trees and holes of rocks, where it lays five or six eggs of a pale bluish green, with brown spots. The female sits about twenty days, during which she is constantly attended by the male, who

not only supplies her with food, but relieves her by sometimes taking her place in the nest.

This bird preys upon rabbits, young ducks, and chickens; and has been known to seize young lambs, and even sheep when sick or weak, and to pick out their eyes while yet alive. It is fond of carrion, which it scents at a great distance. It feeds also on earth-worms, reptiles, and even shell-fish, when pressed by hunger; and will suck the eggs of other birds.

The Raven is said to be particularly attached to the place where it has been bred; and we are assured that when a pair select a spot for their nest, they make it their ordinary residence, which they do not readily abandon. White gives an interesting account of a pair of ravens which bred in a small wood at Selborne. "In the centre of this grove," says he, "there stood an oak, which, though shapely and tall on the whole, bulged out into a large

excrescence in the middle of the stem. On this a pair of ravens had fixed their residence for such a series of years that the oak was distinguished by the title of the Raven Tree. Many were the attempts of the neighbouring youths to get at this eyry; the difficulty whetted their inclinations, and each was ambitious of surmounting the arduous task. But when they arrived at the swelling, it jutted out so in their way, and was so far beyond their grasp, that the most daring lads were awed, and acknowledged the undertaking to be too hazardous. So the ravens built on, nest upon nest, in perfect security, till the fatal day arrived on which the wood was to be levelled. It was in the month of February, when those birds usually sit. The saw was applied to the butt, the wedges were inserted into the opening, the woods echoed to the heavy blows of the beetle or mallet, the tree nodded to its fall, but still the dam sat on.

At last, when it gave way, the bird was flung from her nest, and though her parental affection deserved a better fate, she was whipped down by the twigs, which brought her dead to the ground."

The Raven may be rendered very tame and familiar, and in this state he shows a wonderful capability of instruction. He may be trained to fowling like a hawk, to fetch and carry like a dog, to speak like a parrot, and, what is still more extraordinary, to imitate vocal music. A writer of repute informs us that he has heard a raven sing a song with great distinctness, truth, and humour. As a domestic, this bird indeed possesses many amusing qualities. Inquisitive and impudent, he examines every corner, affronts the dogs, drives the cats from one place to another, plays his pranks among the poultry, teases every animal around him, and is a constant attendant on the cook. She is in fact his

principal favourite; though he does not hesitate to incur her anger by snatching from her some delicate morsel. When wild, the raven is a voracious plunderer; when tame, by nature a glutton, and by habit a thief. He purloins everything to gratify his appetite, and even things which are of no use to him; frequently picking up rings, tea-spoons, money, and other articles of value, and carrying them to his secret hoard.

The longevity of the raven is equal to that of any bird, or perhaps of any other animal; for it has been known to live more than a hundred years.

ROOK.

The Rook is about the size of the Carrion Crow, and nearly resembles it in figure, being about eighteen inches in length and three feet

in breadth. It differs from all the rest of the genus in having the base of the bill and nostrils as far as the eyes covered with a rough scurfy skin, caused, it is said, by its habit of thrusting its bill into the earth in search of worms: but Bewick remarks that, as this appearance is observed in such as are brought up tame, and are not accustomed to that mode of subsistence, it ought rather to be considered as an original peculiarity. They are fond of the larvæ of the cockchafer, for which they search with indefatigable pains. During the breeding time they are jealous and watchful, and will rob one another when they can. They live together in large societies, building close to each other in trees, frequently in the midst of large and populous towns. These rookeries are often the scene of severe conflicts. New-comers are often driven away by the old inhabitants, their half-built nests torn in pieces, and the unfortunate couple are forced

to begin their work anew in some more undisturbed situation. Of this a remarkable instance at Newcastle is related by Bewick. In 1783, a pair of rooks, after an unsuccessful attempt to settle in a rookery not far from the Exchange, sought refuge on the spire of that edifice, and, though constantly interrupted by other rooks, contrived to build their nest and hatch their young on the top of the vane, undisturbed by the noise of the people beneath, though the nest and its inhabitants turned about with every change of the wind. They built in the same place every succeeding year till 1793, soon after which the spire was taken down.

A similar circumstance is recorded by Darwin, not of a single pair, but of a whole colony, which built on the spire of Welborn church in Lincolnshire, in 1794. There was a tradition, that there was formerly a rookery in some high trees close to the churchyard, and,

on their being cut down, probably in the breeding season, the rooks removed to the church, building their nests on the outside of the spire, on the tops of the windows, which, by their projecting a little from the spire, afforded them a convenient place; and when they could not find convenience there, they built in the inside.

Before the late thorough repair of Windsor Castle, not only the trees in the park close to it were covered with the nests of rooks, but large colonies of those birds were established in the friezes and battlements of that extensive building. The old walls were full of holes, in which they had doubtless nestled for centuries.

Rooks are exceedingly particular in having sentinels while they are feeding in parties after the breeding season; for they generally seek subsistence for their young family apart. These sentinels are so vigilant, that it is a difficult matter to get within shot of a foraging party;

whence arises the popular notion that these birds can smell gunpowder at a great distance. Experience, however, proves that it is just as difficult to approach them without alarming the sentinels when only carrying an umbrella, as when armed with a fowling-piece: but they seem to have some knowledge of fire-arms, from being alarmed when a walking-stick is levelled at them, though no noise is made.

When the breeding season is over, the rooks forsake their habitations, but return to them in autumn; some of them even begin to repair their shattered nests. "This meeting," says Mr. Knapp, "is very differently conducted from that in the spring. Their voices have now a mellowness approaching to musical, with little admixture of the harsh and noisy contention so distracting at the former season, and seem more like a grave consultation as to future procedure; and as winter approaches they depart for some other place. The object

of this meeting is unknown. The rooks appear to associate from preference to society, as trees are common everywhere; but what motive they can have in lingering thus for a few autumnal mornings, and counselling with each other around their abandoned and now useless nests, which before the return of spring are generally beaten from the trees, is by no means manifest to us."

The country mansion appears incomplete without its rookery. The cawing of rooks is a sound highly agreeable to most persons from its rural associations. "The rook," says Bingley, "has but two or three notes, and when he attempts a solo we cannot praise his song; but when he performs in concert, which is his chief delight, these notes, though rough in themselves, being intermixed with those of the multitude, have, as it were, all their rough edges worn off, and become harmonious, especially when softened in the air, where the bird chiefly

performs. We have this music in perfection, when the whole colony is raised by the discharge of a gun."

"The rook," says Selby, "from its sometimes eating grain and other seeds, has erroneously been viewed in the light of an enemy by most husbandmen; and in several districts attempts have been made either to banish it or to extirpate the breed. But wherever this measure has been carried into effect, the most serious injury to the corn and other crops has invariably followed from the unchecked devastations of the grub and caterpillar. As experience is the sure test of utility, a change of conduct has in consequence been partially adopted; and some farmers now find the encouragement of the breed of rooks to be greatly to their interest in freeing their lands from the grub of the cockchafer, an insect very abundant in many of the southern counties. In Northumberland I have witnessed its usefulness in feed-

ing on the larvæ of the insect commonly called Harry Longlegs, which is particularly destructive to the roots of grain and young clovers."

HOOPOE.

Of the species belonging to this family of the Pie tribe only one is found in Britain. It is a beautiful bird, about twelve inches in length, having a long slender bill, and its head adorned with a crest, consisting of a double row of feathers, of a pale orange yellow tipped with black. The neck is a reddish brown; the back and wings are crossed with broad bars of black and white, and the tail consists of ten feathers, marked with white, and when closed assuming the form of a crescent.

The Hoopoe can scarcely be called a resident, for it is very seldom known to breed here. The female makes no nest, but lays

her eggs, generally four or five, bluish white, and marked with pale brown spots, in the hollow of a tree, sometimes in a hole in a wall, or even on the ground. She is said to have two or three broods in a year. With us the Hoopoe is a solitary bird, two being rarely seen together; but in Egypt, where it abounds, it is never observed unless in small flocks. The birds of this family are in general uncleanly in their manners, haunting dunghills, and living chiefly on insects of the beetle tribe.

The remarkable crest which adorns the Hoopoe usually falls behind upon its neck, but it is erected when the bird is surprised or irritated. At such times the tail also is erected and spread like a fan.

MAGPIE.

This, though one of the most common of British birds, is very handsome, both in shape and colour; the head, neck, back, breast, and tail-coverts being of a deep black, and forming a fine contrast with the snowy whiteness of the under parts and scapulars. The plumage in general is glossed with blue, purple, and green, which are particularly resplendent on the very long tail. Including the latter, its length is about eighteen inches.

The Magpie builds in general on some almost inaccessible bough at the top of a high tree, leaving a hole in the side of the nest for admittance, and covering at top with a dome of thorny twigs closely interwoven, so as to form a secure retreat from the attacks of other birds. The inside is lined with wool and other soft materials, on which the female lays seven

WOODPECKER.

NUT-HATCH.

KINGFISHER.

MAGPIE.

JAY.

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or eight eggs, of a pale green spotted with black. Sir Humphrey Davy has remarked, that when they are breeding, the appearance of two magpies betokens fine weather; that of a single one is a sign of rain.

Slaney has given a vivid sketch of the manners of the Magpie. "His colours," says that writer, "are handsome and varied; his shape elegant; his movements active and decided. His flight, guided by his long rudder of a tail, is marked from all others, and is particularly graceful when, gliding down from some high tree in a gradual curve, he stands almost erect; hops, one, two, three; peeps into some crevice or hole, discovers some booty, and immediately routs it out and carries it off. The Magpie is mischievous: if he finds a poor toad or frog, he teases and pecks it to death; snatches up and devours young chickens and partridges, in spite of the old bird; lights on a sheep's or cow's back, and pecks away at any

sore place. If a hawk, fox, cat, or weasel appear, off goes the Magpie in chase, buffeting the former and following the latter, chattering, screaming, and alarming the neighbourhood. There are few watchmen so vigilant as our Magpie. If a Christmas schoolboy steals along the hedge with his gun, the black and white sentinel, from the top of some high tree, tells the whole world to beware. Though very wary when people are about, this pillager knows how to choose his time; and we have been amused with watching him in the early morning, hopping about the grass-plot close to the house, surveying every bone left by the dog, and spying about to discover any unconsidered trifle to his taste. Grub, beetle, young duck, cockchafer, frog, hen's or other eggs, raw meat, nestling bird, old dead rat, or ripe cherries, all are welcome to our party-coloured Mag."

"We have often been amused," says the

same writer, "on pursuing a brood of young Magpies, to perceive how well they can hold their tongues at command of their parents; so that they will sit quiet and hidden among the thick boughs of a tree, though just before they were in full conversation."

The Magpie, in a domestic state, retains its natural character. As it is one of the most cunning, so it is one of the most docile birds. It is often taught to speak very distinctly; but its tones are too shrill to be an exact imitation of the human voice, which the raven and the parrot can more perfectly counterfeit. Those who teach it to speak have a custom of slitting its tongue; which is equally cruel and absurd, as it puts the creature to great pain without improving its speech.

JAY.

The Jay is a beautiful bird, about thirteen inches in length, with a chestnut brown coat, variegated with purple and grey, and contrasting elegantly with his barred wings of blue and black. The feathers on the forehead, white, streaked with black, form a tuft which the bird can erect or depress at pleasure.

The Jay is not more distinguished for the beautiful arrangement of its colours, than for its harsh grating voice and restless disposition. The moment it perceives the sportsman, it gives by its cry the alarm of danger. Bewick tells us that Jays sometimes assemble in great numbers early in the spring, and seem to hold a conference, probably for the purpose of pairing and fixing upon the districts which they are to occupy. "To hear them," he says, "is truly curious. While some gabble, shout, or

whistle, others, with a harsh voice, seem to command attention. The noise made on these occasions may be aptly compared to that of a distant meeting of disorderly drunken persons."

The Jay selects for its nest the fork of a bush or tree in a solitary part of a wood, laying five or six eggs, ash-grey, mixed with green, and faintly spotted with brown.

The Jay is a great devourer of fruit and grain, particularly cherries, peas, acorns, and nuts: he will also plunder the nests of smaller birds of their eggs and young, and sometimes pounce on the old birds, on which he preys, as well as on mice. When tamed, this bird may be rendered very familiar, and shows a singular propensity to imitation and mimicry. Thus, it will counterfeit the bleating of a lamb, the mewing of a cat, the cry of a kite or buzzard, the hooting of an owl, the neighing of a horse; nay, Bewick assures

us that he heard a Jay imitate the sound of a saw so exactly, that, though it was on a Sunday, he could hardly be persuaded that there was not a carpenter at work in the house. Another had learned, on the approach of cattle, to set a cur-dog upon them by whistling and calling his name. At last, during frost, the dog was excited to attack a cow with calf, when the animal fell on the ice and was hurt. The Jay was complained of as a nuisance, and the owner was obliged to destroy it.

KINGFISHER.

The Kingfisher is considered as the most beautiful of British birds. In shape it is rather clumsy, the head being large in proportion to the size of the body, and the legs and feet very small. In length it is only seven inches, two of which are occupied by the straight strong

bill. The crown of the head and the wings are a deep shining green, spotted with bright light blue. The middle of the back and the short tail are a most resplendent azure; the breast is white, the whole under part of the body bright orange, and the legs and toes red.

This bird frequents the margins of running streams, where it will sit for hours together on some projecting twig or stone: sometimes fluttering its wings, and exposing its brilliant plumage to the sun; at others, hovering in the air like a hawk, it awaits the proper moment for seizing its prey, on which it darts almost unerringly, often remaining under water for several seconds before it has secured the little fish, the object of its pursuit, which it carries to land, beats to death, and then swallows. Except in the breeding season, it is usually seen alone, skimming the surface of the water with the rapidity of an arrow, like a brilliant meteor. Its cry is shrill and harsh.

The Kingfisher either makes a hole in the bank of a stream for its nest, or occupies the old holes of the water-rat and other animals: but it is not so shy and solitary a bird as it has been represented, frequently constructing its nest near human habitations. It lays to the number of seven eggs, of a clear white. The young are extremely voracious, and may be discovered by their incessant chirping. As the species is not so numerous as might be expected from the number of the eggs, it is supposed that many of the young are destroyed by floods, which must often rise above the holes in which they are bred.

This bird was celebrated by the ancients under the name of the Halcyon, and many fabulous properties have from a very remote period been attributed to it. It was formerly believed, for instance, that if its body were suspended by a thread, some magnetic influence would always

turn its breast to the north; and that its stuffed skin would preserve woollen cloth from the ravages of moths.

WOODPECKER.

The Woodpecker receives his name from his habit of pecking at trees, for the purpose of getting at the insects lodged in chinks and holes in the bark. For this purpose it is furnished with a large strong bill, sharp at the end and formed like a wedge, with which it penetrates through the sound wood to the inner decayed part, where its food is lodged. Its neck is short and thick, and provided with powerful muscles, which enable it to strike with such force as to be heard at a considerable distance. Its taper tongue is capable of being greatly lengthened, and has at the end

a hard horny substance curving slightly downward, which penetrates into crevices in trees, and extracts the insects and their eggs which happen to be lodged there. The tail consists of ten stiff sharp-pointed feathers, rough on the under side and bent inward, with which it supports itself on the trunks of trees while in search of food; and for this purpose its feet are short and thick, and the toes, placed two forward and two backward, are armed with strong hooked claws, with which it clings firmly, and creeps up and down in all directions.

Of the four or five species that have been noticed in Great Britain, the Green Woodpecker is the most common. It is named after the prevailing colour of its plumage, but the crown of the head is crimson. This bird feeds on insects, and is particularly fond of bees and ants; hence it is more frequently seen on the ground than the other species. Inserting its long tongue into the holes through which the

ants issue, it draws them out in abundance; or, making a breach in the nest with feet and bill, it picks them up at leisure, together with their eggs.

Woodpeckers nestle in the hollows of trees fifteen or twenty feet from the ground. These excavations are generally made by themselves, and the hole is as perfect a circle as if it had been described by a pair of compasses. It is curious to observe them try every part of the dead limb of a tree till they have discovered the most sonorous, and then they repeat their strokes with such velocity that the head is scarcely perceived to move. The softer woods, such as the elm, ash, and asp, are chiefly attacked for the purpose of being excavated for nests, and they are perforated only where they exhibit symptoms of decay. The male and female take their turns at boring through the sound part of the wood till they reach that which is decayed and rotten: there the latter,

without any further preparation, lays four or five eggs of a greenish colour, marked with small black spots.

NUTHATCH.

The Nuthatch may be called a woodpecker in miniature, being scarcely larger than a sparrow, and having a blue-grey back, buff-coloured breast, and a black streak down the eye through the neck. It is a shy and solitary bird, frequenting woods and inclosed situations. It feeds on caterpillars, beetles, and various kinds of insects; it is also fond of nuts, and from its expertness in cracking them it has obtained its name. Having placed a nut firmly in a chink, it takes its stand a little above, and, striking it with all its force with its bill, perforates the shell and picks out the kernel: when disturbed at its work, it very readily

removes the nut and flies away with it. White tells us that he often used to carry nuts and place them in the crack of a gate-post for his hacking friend to break them. Hence, says Montague, it is no uncommon thing to find in the autumn, in the crevices of the bark of an old tree, a great many broken nutshells, the work of this bird, who repeatedly returns to the same spot for this purpose. To break the common hazel-nut is a work of some labour, but it breaks the filbert with ease. In the cider season, this bird is sometimes seen picking the seeds from the refuse of the pressed apples. It is more expert at climbing than the woodpecker itself, running up and down trees in all directions.

The older naturalists tell us that the Nuthatch selects for her nest the hole of a tree, frequently the deserted habitation of a woodpecker; and that, if it be larger than is required, she narrows the entrance with clay and mud,

so neatly kneaded that a potter could not do it more dexterously. Buffon adds that she strengthens the fabric of soft earth with small stones. The testimony of a recent observer not only confirms the fact of the clay barricade, but adds a circumstance not a little curious. Montague ascertained, that if this barrier at the entrance of the hole be destroyed while there are eggs in the nest, it is speedily rebuilt, —to prevent probably the unwelcome intrusion of the woodpecker and other birds of superior size and strength, which build in similar situations. It is not unlikely that this wall may also be constructed to prevent the unfledged young from tumbling out of the nest when they begin to stir about.

No persecution will force this little bird from its nest when sitting. It defends its habitation to the last extremity, striking the invader with its bill and wings, and making a hissing noise; and, after every effort of defence

THROSTLE.

LINNET.

CANARY-FINCH.

GOLD FINCH.

BULLFINCH.

has been employed in vain, it will suffer itself to be caught by the hand rather than desert its charge.

THRUSH.

The Song Thrush, called also the Throstle and Mavis, is about nine inches in length. The head and back of this bird are olive brown; and the throat, breast, and body beneath are white with dark brown spots. This is one of the sweetest of British songsters. Every wood and grove re-echoes with its notes, which it pours forth from some high tree, frequently beginning to sing as early as February, if the weather is mild, and continuing during the greater part of the summer. It is as remarkable for the clearness and fulness as for the sweetness and variety of its notes.

Knapp observes with reference to the song of

the Thrush, that the species seems to have no regular notes, each individual piping a voluntary of his own. "During one spring," he says, "an individual song-thrush, frequenting a favourite copse, after a certain round of tune, trilled out most regularly some notes that conveyed so clearly the words 'Lady-bird, lady-bird,' that every one remarked the resemblance. He survived the winter, and in the ensuing spring 'Lady-bird, lady-bird,' was still the burden of our evening song: it then ceased, and we never heard this pretty modulation more. Though merely an occasional strain, yet I have noticed it elsewhere—it thus appearing to be a favourite utterance."

The Throstle feeds on insects in general, and on berries, and with the Blackbird it is often deemed an enemy to the gardener, because it takes a share of his gooseberries and currants. In return, however, these birds assist him in destroying the snails, whose shells they skilfully

break by repeated strokes against a stone: and it is not uncommon to find many fragments of shells together, as if they had been conveyed to a particular stone for the purpose. In this occupation they are frequently engaged during the heat of the day in summer, when they may be observed hopping up and down between the rows of cabbages and potatoes, and routing out the snails from their cool retreats beneath them.

The nest of the Song Thrush is of peculiarly ingenious construction. It is thus described by Rennie:—"The interior of the nest is about the form and size of a large breakfast tea-cup, being as uniformly rounded, and, though not polished, almost as smooth. For this little cup the parent birds lay a massive foundation of moss. When the shell or frame is completed, the bird begins the interior masonry by spreading pellets of horse or cow dung on the basket-work of moss and straw, beginning at the bottom, which is intended to be the thickest, and proceeding

gradually from the central point. This material, however, is too dry to adhere of itself with sufficient firmness to the moss, and on this account it is always laid on with the saliva of the bird as a cement: yet it must require no little patience in the little architect to lay it on so very smoothly with no other implement besides its narrow pointed bill. It would, indeed, puzzle any of our best workmen to work so uniformly smooth with such a tool; but from the frame being nicely prepared, and by using only small pellets at a time, which are spread out with the upper part of the bill, the work is rendered somewhat easier. The whole wall when finished is not much thicker than pasteboard, though hard, tough, and water-tight; and it is more warm and comfortable than at first view might appear, and admirably calculated for protecting the eggs or young from the bleak winds which prevail in the early part of the spring, when the Song Thrush breeds."

The Thrush usually builds in a thick bush, hawthorn, holly, silver fir, furze, ivied tree, or sometimes in a dead fence where the grass grows high; yet sometimes it has been known to nestle within outbuildings. A remarkable instance of this kind is mentioned in the Magazine of Natural History, as having happened in Scotland, where a pair of thrushes built upon a small harrow placed upon the joists of a cart-shed, in which a millwright and three of his men were constantly at work. The day after they commenced their operations, and before the nest was finished, the female laid her first egg. The cock took his share in the duty of hatching, but did not sit so long as the hen, and often fed her when she was on the nest. In thirteen days the young birds were out of the shells, which were always carried away by the old ones.

It is remarkable that the Thrush and the Blackbird, though so careful to provide warmth

and shelter for their eggs and young, show no solicitude to procure the same comforts for themselves in winter, as they usually roost in open hedges along with the redwing and chaffinch, and are frequently frozen to death in severe weather, or caught by bat-fowlers.

BULLFINCH.

This bird, remarkable for its short thick bill, is scarcely six inches long, and liable to considerable variation in its colours. In general the back is ash-grey, the breast and belly red, the wings and tail black, and the upper tail-coverts and hindermost quill-feathers white. In the female the colours are less bright, and the under parts of a reddish brown. These birds are always seen in pairs, or in broods.

The native notes of the Bullfinch are few, but remarkably soft, and uttered in so low a

tone as to escape a common observer; but in confinement it is very docile, and may be taught a great variety of tunes, and even to imitate human speech. "I once had a nest of bullfinches given me," says Mrs. Charlotte Smith, "of which only one was reared: it was a hen, which I kept only because I had reared it; but she hung in the same room with a very fine Virginia nightingale, whose song she soon acquired, and went through the same notes in a lower and softer tone."

Many of these birds, that have been taught to whistle various tunes, have of late years been imported from Germany. They are chiefly instructed by weavers while at work at their looms; hence the bird is excited to sing when a person standing before him moves his head backward and forward.

The usual haunts of the Bullfinch in summer are woods and thickets; but in winter it approaches nearer to cultivated grounds, and

feeds on various kinds of berries and seeds. In spring it frequents gardens, where it is unjustly accused of doing mischief by preying on the young buds of fruit-trees, because it seeks and destroys the grubs which are lodged within them.

The nest of the Bullfinch resembles in structure that of the Jay, though indeed much smaller and of neater workmanship. Sometimes this bird builds in a low thick bush, but more commonly on the branch of a spruce or silver fir. The hen lays five or six eggs, of a dull bluish white, marked at the larger end with dark spots.

GOLDFINCH.

The Finches form a very numerous family of the feathered creation, which embraces also the linnets, the canary, and the house-sparrow.

They feed on various kinds of seeds and grain, as well as upon insects and their eggs.

The Goldfinch is as much distinguished for liveliness and melody of song as for the beauty of its plumage. The forehead and chin are a rich scarlet, divided by a black patch passing from each corner of the bill to the eyes: the cheeks are white; the top of the head black, which colour extends downward on each side, dividing the white on the cheeks from a white spot on the hinder part of the neck. The back and breast are chestnut brown; the wings black, marked in the middle of each feather with yellow, forming a large patch when the wing is closed; the tail black, with a white spot near the tip of each feather.

The song of the Goldfinch is as pleasing as his plumage is brilliant. He begins singing early in the spring, and continues till the breeding season is over. This bird sometimes builds in hedges, but more commonly in trees, especi-

ally evergreens. It constructs a neat, compact nest of moss, dry grass, and roots, lined with hair, wool, and the down of thistles or of the willow. The female lays four or five eggs of a bluish white, with spots of deep purple at the larger end. The parent birds feed their young with caterpillars and insects; subsisting themselves on various kinds of seeds, and occasionally on those of the Scotch fir. They are particularly fond of the seeds of the thistle. "If," says Slaney, "the farmer has neglected his fields, and the thistles are abundant and coming into seed, there shall we find our handsome finch busy endeavouring to mitigate the evil." It is gregarious in winter, and lives to a great age.

The Goldfinch is easily tamed, and sings delightfully even in confinement. In this state he is extremely docile, and will learn many little tricks, such as to draw up his water and food in a small bucket, to fire a cracker, and

the like. He is so fond of society, that, when a small mirror is placed in his cage, he will pick up his food grain by grain and eat it before the glass, doubtless under the impression that he is eating in company.

Rennie relates an instance of parental affection which he once witnessed in a pair of goldfinches, whose young had been taken from the nest. The cage containing them being hung upon their native tree in an orchard, gradually removed to the outside of a window, and afterwards taken in doors, the parent goldfinches followed at the risk of their own freedom and supplied the young with food. No attempt was made to catch the old ones; yet, notwithstanding their anxiety for their young, and though the window was left open for them, they would never remain in the room during the night, but roosted in a neighbouring tree in the orchard.

LINNET.

This bird is of the same size as the Canary. The general colour of the upper parts of the head, neck, and back is a chestnut brown, and of the under parts a reddish white. The blue bill of the linnet would alone suffice to distinguish it from the rest of its tribe.

The song of the Linnet is lively and sweetly varied: its manners are gentle, and such is the docility of its disposition, that it easily adopts the song of other birds when confined with them, and it has even been taught to pronounce words with great distinctness. Daines Barrington makes mention of a linnet, which had been taken from the nest when only two or three days old, and which, from want of other sounds to imitate, had learned to articulate short sentences. He himself heard the bird repeat the words "Pretty boy;" and the

owner, an apothecary at Kensington, assured him that it had neither the note nor the call of any bird whatever.

The Linnet chiefly frequents moors and commons, where it builds its nest in furze-bushes: the outside is composed of dry grass, roots, and moss, and the inside is lined with moss and wool. The female lays four or five eggs, white, tinged with blue, and having irregular brown spots at the larger end: she breeds generally twice in the year. In winter Linnets are frequently seen in large flocks; and their assembling with other kinds of small birds is said to be a sure presage of the stormy weather with which that season usually sets in.

This bird feeds on various sorts of seeds, and is particularly fond of linseed, (the seed of flax,) from which circumstance it derives its name. Like the Goldfinch, it is a true friend to the slovenly farmer. "We recollect," says Slaney, "one December, observing two large

flocks of these birds, of above two hundred each, frequenting for several days some turnip-fields, which were full of charlock or kedlock run to seed, and the ripe pods of which were just bursting to cast forth their grains. The linnets were indefatigably engaged in picking up the seeds of this troublesome weed; so that if each bird devoured only one hundred seeds daily, their united forces destroyed each day forty thousand charlock seeds."

CANARY BIRD.

This species of the Finch family, though neither of British origin nor a voluntary visiter, may be considered as ours by adoption. It was first brought from the Canary Islands, about the beginning of the sixteenth century, and is now spread over all Europe. It is never seen in this country but in a state of

captivity, and partakes of all the differences and varieties incident to that condition.

This bird is about five inches and a half in length. The general colour of its plumage is yellow, more or less mixed with grey, and in some with brown on the upper parts. The tail is long and somewhat forked.

"The breeding and rearing of these charming birds," says Bewick, "form an amusement of the most pleasing kind, and afford a variety of scenes highly interesting and gratifying to innocent minds. In the places fitted up and accommodated to the use of the little captives, we are delighted to see the workings of nature exemplified in the choice of their mates, in the building of their nests, in the hatching and rearing of their young, and in the ardour exhibited by the male, whether he is engaged in assisting his faithful mate in collecting materials for her nest, in arranging them for her accommodation, in providing food for her off-

spring, or in chanting his lively songs during every part of the important business."

The song of the Canary Bird is usually composed of the notes of the titlark or the nightingale; but the English Canaries have more of the former than of the latter. Daines Barrington saw two birds of this kind imported from the Canary Islands which had no song; and he was afterwards informed that a ship brought over a great number of them with the same defect. For many years about sixteen hundred canaries have been imported annually from the Tyrol: most of these have been educated under parents whose progenitors were instructed by a nightingale.

These birds live chiefly on canary, rape, and hemp seed.

ROBIN.

WREN. WOOD PIGEON.

BLACKBIRD. WATERWAGTAIL

ROBIN REDBREAST.

The familiarity of this bird with mankind is well known; and the prepossession prevailing in its favour is so universal and so ancient, that it is impossible to decide whether the one may not have originated in the other, and which should be considered as the cause and which the effect. It derives its name from the deep red orange of the neck and breast; there is a spot of the same colour on the forehead: the upper parts of the head and body are brown, tinged with greenish olive, and the under parts of a dull white. The eyes are remarkably large, black, and expressive.

The Redbreast feeds principally on insects and worms; and, what is remarkable, it never eats them alive. Seizing them with its bill, it beats them against the ground till they are dead, and till the inner part comes away; on

which, taking them in the same manner by the other end, it cleanses the outer part, which alone it eats. In winter, when the woods and fields are destitute of insects, the Robin approaches our houses and taps on the windows with its bill, as if to solicit an asylum, which is always cheerfully granted; and, with a confidence the most delightful, he hops round the house, picks up crumbs, and makes himself one of the family.

Mrs. Charlotte Smith has recorded a highly pleasing instance of the familiarity of the Robin. "Two years ago," says she, "towards the close of August, a robin frequented the drawing-room at B——, and became in the course of the winter so tame, that, as soon as the windows were open in the morning, he used to come in, and seemed to consider it as his domicile, though he always roosted among the shrubs near the window. On being called, he readily made his appearance, and used to

sit and sing at the back of a chair or on the piano-forte. He was a constant attendant at the breakfast-table, and expected to be fed like a domestic animal; for, when we went out for a few days, he resorted to the offices and followed the servants into the larder. My pretty Robin, however, was a very Turk in disposition, and would suffer no brother near the throne; for he drove away, with every mark of resentment, any of his compatriots who during the hard weather showed any inclination to share the advantages he had appropriated to himself; of which, indeed, he seemed to feel all the value: for, as winter advanced, he became so familiar as to sit and sing on my daughter's shoulder, and appeared to have totally lost all the apprehensions of a wild bird. If he chose to go out, instead of beating himself against the window, he sat on the edge of the frame till it was opened for him; or, taking any opportunity when the door was

open, he flew through the greenhouse, or through the passages, till he found his way out. He was a great favourite as well in the kitchen as the parlour; and it was with general regret that, early in spring, he was missed and never returned. It is most likely that, being so tame and fearless, he was destroyed by a cat."

In summer this bird is rarely seen about our houses, having retired in spring to woods and thickets, where it prepares for the accommodation of its future family. It is a very early builder, and usually selects for its nest a shallow cavity among grass or moss, in a bank or at the root of a tree, sometimes in a hole in a tree in a wood or secluded lane, far from its winter haunts, about the cottage-door or the farm-yard. The nest itself is always neatly made of moss and grass, and lined with hair, in which feathers are sometimes intertwined. Many of these birds, however, do not go fur-

ther from their winter haunts than the nearest hedgerow. Bewick tells us, that, in order the more effectually to conceal their nest, they cover it with leaves, taking care to leave only a narrow winding entrance under the heap. The female lays from five to nine eggs, of a dull white, spotted with red. During the time of sitting, the male perches near the nest, and makes the wood resound with his warbling, at the same time driving all birds of his own species from his dwelling; so that two pairs are never known to be lodged in the same bush. As soon as the young are capable of providing for themselves, they and the parent birds leave the woods and thickets, and draw near the habitations of mankind.

The song of the Redbreast is singularly pleasing. "Few observers of Nature," says a writer in the Magazine of Natural History, "can have passed unheeded the sweetness and peculiarity of note of the Robin, and its va-

rious indications with regard to atmospheric changes,—the mellow liquid notes of spring and summer, the melancholy sweet pipings of autumn, and the jerking chirps of winter. He may be considered as part of the naturalist's barometer. On a summer evening, though the weather be unsettled, he sometimes takes his stand on the topmost twig that looks up to the sky, or on the house-top, singing cheerfully and sweetly: this is an unerring promise of succeeding fine weather."

Redbreasts are never seen in flocks, but always singly; and, in those seasons when most other small birds associate together, they still retain their solitary habits.

WREN.

The common Wren is another feathered favourite of man, enjoying the same exemption from his persecution as the Robin. It is not more than three inches and a half in length. The general colour of its plumage is clear brown, marked with paler and darker double wavy lines of the same colour.

This active little bird, which is very common, and may be seen, with its short tail erect, bustling and prying into every recess, braves our severest winters, which it contributes to enliven by its sprightly notes. Its song is a short but very pleasing warble, and louder than might be expected from the small size of the bird: this it continues throughout the whole year, and it has been heard to sing even during a fall of snow. It is not surprising, however, that so small a bird should frequently perish in

severe winters. The Wrens then retire for shelter into holes of walls and under the eaves of barns, and of corn and hay-stacks; and Selby says that he has often found the bodies of several together in old nests, into which they had crowded, no doubt, for additional warmth and protection. Several of them have also been found rolled up into a sort of ball in the hole of a wall, for the evident purpose of keeping each other warm during the night.

In the spring, the Wren, like the Redbreast, betakes itself to the woods and fields. It displays great art in the construction of its nest, of which Rennie gives an interesting description. "It is very common," he says, "for the Wren to build under the brow of the bank of a river, where the overhanging turf has been undermined by the stream. It appears equally fond of the shelter afforded by ivy on trees or walls, though it will often build on the fork of a bare overhanging bough. More common-

ly still, its nest is found sheltered under the projecting side of a hay-stack or the eaves of a thatched cottage. The Wren is one of those birds which construct their nests with a domed roof. The principal material of which it is composed is green moss, of which it may sometimes be seen carrying a tuft nearly as large as itself. When the Wren attaches its nest to the bare clay, as well as when it chooses the mossy trunk of a tree, it first sketches an oval outline of the structure by gluing with its saliva bits of moss all round so as to be narrower at top than at bottom. Sometimes, instead of placing the back of the nest against the clay, it attaches only the arch of the top to that support; the under part of the nest being built downward and suspended from it. This foundation of moss is enlarged by the insertion of fresh pieces, apparently glued with saliva, as the foundation is glued to the clay, till a hemisphere is formed about twenty times

the bulk of the little architect, with a small oval entrance in the side. Sometimes scarcely any other material but moss is used in the whole structure, the interior being lined with a smooth bed of the finer sorts. In general a few sticks, straws, or dead leaves, are placed on the outside, by way of binding to the moss; while the inside is lined with wool, hair, wood-shavings, cotton, worsted, feathers, and similar matters." The Wren commonly lays six or eight, but sometimes so many as eighteen, white eggs, sprinkled with small reddish spots, chiefly at the larger end. Hence Willughby remarks: "It is strange to admiration that so small a bodied bird should feed such a company of young and not miss one bird."

As a destroyer of insects there is not perhaps a more useful bird than the Wren. Hence it is often protected by man from motives of interest, and as a necessary consequence it seems particularly fond of human society. It has

long been a custom in many parts of the country to fix a small box at the end of a long pole in gardens, or about houses, as a place for it to build in: here it makes its nest and hatches its young. The parent birds feed the young brood with a variety of insects, particularly such as are injurious to gardens. One observer was at the trouble to count the number of times that a pair of these birds came from their box and returned to it with insects for their young. He ascertained that they did this from forty to sixty times in an hour; and in one particular hour, the birds carried food to their young seventy-one times. In this business they were engaged the greater part of the day,—say twelve hours. Taking the medium therefore at fifty times an hour, it appeared that a single pair of these birds took from the cabbage, salad, beans, peas, and other vegetables in the garden, at least six hundred insects in the course of one day. This calcula-

tion is founded on the supposition that the two birds took only a single insect each time; but it is highly probable that they often took several at once.

A species of the Wren, the Golden-crested—thus named from its beautiful orange-coloured crest—is the smallest of British birds, being not quite an inch long when stripped of its feathers, and its weight seldom exceeding eighty grains. The general green hue of its plumage is so well suited to the colour of the evergreen firs, among the branches of which its industrious life is spent, looking with unwearied care for the larvæ of insects, and searching the underside of all the small boughs, that a careless observer would never perceive it, though he might walk daily under the trees in which it dwelt.

WATER-WAGTAIL.

The Wagtails, of which there are three British species, the pied, the grey, and the yellow, are distinguished by their brisk lively motions, as well as by the great length of their tails, which they jerk up and down incessantly: from this circumstance they have received their name. They do not hop, but run very nimbly upon the ground after flies and other insects on which they feed. They likewise feed on small worms, frequently fluttering about the ploughman in search of them, and following cattle in pursuit of those by which they are generally surrounded. All these birds frequent the borders of streams, pools, and marshes, busily picking up the insects which swarm in those situations. They fly in jerks, at the same time uttering a cheerful chirp.

The most common of the Wagtails, the Pied

Wagtail, is provincially called the Dishwasher and the Washerwoman. It is about seven inches in length. The bill, back of the head and neck, throat, breast, and legs, are black; the forehead, cheeks, and sides of the neck, white; the body is a dark ash above, and the under part white. The black on the breast is bordered by a line of white forming a gorget.

This species makes its nest on the ground, of dry grass, moss, and fibrous roots, lining it with hair and feathers; and it has sometimes been known to breed in chimneys in the deserted nests of swallows. The female lays five white eggs spotted with brown, much resembling those of the Cuckoo, which frequently deposits her egg in the nests of the Wagtails. The latter are very attentive to their young, continuing to feed and train them for three or four weeks after they are able to fly; defending them with great courage when in danger, or endeavouring to draw aside the enemy by

various little arts. They are also said to be very attentive to the cleanliness of the nest; and have even been known to remove light substances, such as paper and straw, which have been placed as a mark to find them by. The young birds have not the black patch on the throat till the spring, and the old ones lose it in winter.

RINGDOVE.

The Ringdove, or Wood Pigeon, the largest of all the Pigeon tribe, measures about seventeen inches in length, and weighs about twenty ounces. The upper parts of the body are of a bluish ash colour, deepest on the upper part of the back; the lower part of the neck and breast are of a claret colour: on the hinder part of the neck is a semicircular line of white on each side, from which circumstance the bird

is named; and above and beneath it the feathers are green and gold, changing in different lights.

The Ringdove is said to be migratory; but, according to Bewick, it is certain that the birds of this species do not leave us entirely, for they assemble in flocks during the winter on the banks of the Tyne, where many of them constantly breed in the spring. It is probable that they migrate no farther than from the northern to the southern parts of our island.

The Ringdove is by no means rare in those parts of the country where there is much woodland; whence it has been called the Wood Pigeon. It forms a flat horizontal nest, without the slightest cavity or depression for containing the eggs and young. Rennie has observed many of these nests within sight, about eight or ten feet from the ground, and usually upon the forks of an oak branch, without any apparent protection for them from above: on the contrary,

the situation of most of them was peculiarly unsheltered and exposed. The nest itself is a very slight structure, and still less calculated for warmth and shelter. The female lays two white eggs, and is generally supposed to have two broods in a year.

Ringdoves feed on acorns, wild fruits, herbs, and all sorts of grain. They are also fond of the roots of couch-grass, and other pernicious weeds known to farmers by the name of whickens; and will eat clover, green corn, and ivy-berries. Their flesh, otherwise very delicious, acquires an unpleasant flavour when they have been obliged, for want of other food, to subsist in severe winters on turnip-greens. The Ringdove has a more plaintive sort of cooing than the common pigeon, but is only heard in pairing time and during fine weather.

It appears that the Ringdove resists all attempts at domestication. White says, "I had a relation who made it a practice for a

time, whenever he could procure the eggs of a Ringdove, to place them under a pair of doves that were sitting in his own pigeon-house; hoping, thereby, if he could bring about a coalition, to enlarge his breed, and teach his own doves to beat out into the woods and to support themselves by mast. The plan was plausible, but something always interrupted the success; for, though the birds were usually hatched and sometimes grew to half their size, yet none ever arrived at maturity. I have myself seen these foundlings in their nest displaying a strange ferocity of nature, so as scarcely to bear to be looked at, and snapping with their bills by way of menace. In short, they always died, perhaps for want of proper sustenance: the owner thought that by their wild and fierce demeanour they frightened their foster-mothers and so were starved."

BLACKBIRD.

The Blackbird, so named from the colour of its plumage, which is altogether black, is somewhat larger than the Thrush, being about ten inches in length. The female is generally of a deep brown, inclining to rust colour on the breast and belly, and differs in so many respects from the male as to have been sometimes mistaken for a bird of a different species.

The Blackbird is a solitary bird, frequenting woods and thickets, and particularly evergreens. It feeds on fruit, berries, insects, and worms; and also upon the snail, whose shell it breaks in the same manner as the Thrush. The Blackbird begins to warble almost as early, and continues to sing as late, as any of our feathered songsters; and it requires very little stretch of imagination to liken its rich mellow notes to words pronounced by the human voice;

which, when tamed, they are easily taught to imitate, as well as to whistle a variety of tunes. It is a restless and timorous bird, easily alarmed and difficult of approach, but readily suffers itself to be caught by birdlime, nooses, or any kind of snare.

The Blackbird builds in general in bushes or low trees. Its nest differs but little in the outer frame-work from that of the Song-thrush, except in being more massive; as is also the clay lining, which is plastered on in a very wet state, probably to save the saliva of the bird. To prevent its moisture from injuring the eggs, it is lined with a thick bed of dry hay, which in some nests is worked very neatly into the hollow formed by the clay, while in others it is laid on more negligently, and thus renders the nest very shallow. Rennie relates that, in two of the nests in his possession, the masonry of the clay is carried round the branch of the bush where they were built; "a circum-

GREAT TITMOUSE.

SPARROW.

SKY-LARK.

GREAT BUNTING.

STARLING.

YELLOW BUNTING.

stance," he remarks, "which, not being of usual occurrence, shows that the little architect was guided by intelligence akin to rationality, and not by what is usually understood by blind instinct." The female lays four or five eggs of a bluish green, marked with irregular dusky spots.

SKYLARK.

The Lark family includes about thirty varieties, six of which are British birds. The largest and most common of these is the Skylark. It is about seven inches in length. On the upper parts of the body the feathers are of a reddish brown colour, dark in the middle, with pale edges; the fore part of the neck is reddish white, spotted with brown; the breast and under parts of the body are white.

This bird is universally known as the har-

binger of spring and the herald of morning, and there is scarcely a poet by whom it has not been celebrated. It begins to sing in January; and is one of the few birds that chant their sprightly notes on the wing.

It has been well observed, that, to enjoy the music of the lark in perfection, we must leave the little musician in possession of his native liberty. It is the landscape, the grove, the golden-eyed morn, the fluttering from branch to branch, the soaring in the air, the answering of the young, that impart true relish to the enrapturing strain.

The Skylark is most common in the open and cultivated upland districts in which corn abounds, and is rarely seen on extensive moors at a distance from arable land.

The Larks make careless nests of bent and coarse withered grass, lined with horse-hair. The nest is commonly placed, if early in spring, in a slight hollow, beside a clod or

stone to screen it from the cold, and always on the sunny side, south or west. The female lays four or five eggs of a greyish brown marked with darker spots. She sits only about a fortnight, and has two broods in a year. When hatched, the mother watches over the young with the most tender solicitude and affection. They are at first fed with worms and insects; but after they are grown up, they live chiefly on seeds and other vegetable substances. They are easily tamed, and become so familiar as to eat off the table, and even to alight on the hand.

During the summer months the lark is an unsocial bird, seldom nestling near others of its kind. The young, after quitting the nest, manifest the same unsocial disposition, not keeping together in a band like most nestlings, but wandering about by themselves; though this must greatly increase the trouble of the parent birds in supplying them with food.

Nevertheless, when the breeding season is quite over, these apparently unsocial birds flock together in almost incredible numbers, and have been then caught for the table from the earliest times in most of the countries of Europe. No sooner, however, does the pairing season commence, than they separate again, each pair choosing a particular field or portion of a field for a breeding-place.

Slaney says that Skylarks frequently alight in roads to dust themselves, and will scarcely take flight when any one approaches them; and that they will often crouch upon the ground like the Partridge, till you can almost touch them. "Whoever has watched a flock of these birds," continues the same writer, "will have observed how, in advancing along a field in search of food, those that are in the rear flit over the heads of those before them, and thus each in his turn becomes foremost; all running up and down, here and there, and searching

every place; so that on examining a spot covered with snow where they have been, we shall find scarcely a square foot unpaced." In frost they frequently come into the close vicinity of large towns, and even cross the sea when pressed by extremity. In January 1820, after a severe frost of a month, an immense flock of larks landed at Sidmouth in Devonshire, apparently from the opposite coast of France. Many were drowned, and great numbers killed, but they were in such poor condition that seven dozen were sold for a shilling.

BUNTING.

In size and colour this bird nearly resembles the Lark. It is very common in all parts of the country, and may frequently be observed in summer, on the highest part of a hedge, or the uppermost branch of a tree, uttering at

short intervals its harsh dissonant cry. It frequents champaign countries abounding in corn, and is rarely found in uncultivated parts, or in meadows remote from arable land; its food consisting chiefly of grain: but it also subsists on various kinds of insects.

The Bunting makes its nest in thick grass, a little elevated above the ground. The eggs are from four to six, of a dirty white, spotted and veined with reddish brown and ash colour; and, while the female is engaged in hatching them, the male sits on the branch of a neighbouring tree and cheers her with his rude song.

In autumn, the Buntings congregate in flocks, and are shot and caught in nets in great numbers. They are often sold for larks, which they nearly resemble, and to which they are not at all inferior; but they may easily be distinguished from those birds by the form of the bill and a tooth-like knot on the roof of the mouth.

YELLOWHAMMER.

The Yellowhammer belongs to the Bunting family, is thus named from the prevailing colour of its plumage, and is one of the most common indigenous birds of this country. It is about six inches in length.

The Yellowhammer may be observed in every lane and on every hedge. Its song is as little attractive as that of the common Bunting, consisting of a repetition of the same note five or six times successively, and terminating in one more lengthened and shrill.

This bird makes an artless nest of straw, hay, dry roots, and moss, lined with hair and wool: it is generally placed in some low bush or hedge. The female lays from three to five eggs, sometimes nearly white, at others of a purplish hue, with dark irregular streaks; and

frequently has more than one brood in the season.

The Yellowhammer feeds on various kinds of seeds and insects. In winter these birds congregate, approaching houses and farmyards, and picking up scattered grains.

TITMOUSE.

This is a tribe of birds comprehending numerous species, seven of which are British. They are distinguished by a peculiar sprightliness and vivacity, as well as by a degree of strength and courage which would not be expected from their diminutive size. Buffon gives an accurate description of these birds, when he says: "They are lively, active, and courageous; they flit from tree to tree, hop from branch to branch, hang upon the bark, poise themselves against walls, hook themselves

on the trunks of trees, and hang in all forms, often with the head downward, in order to be able to examine every little crevice in search of caterpillars, insects, and their eggs. They live also on grain; but, instead of breaking it with their bill, like the Linnets and Finches, almost all the Titmice hold it fast in their claws, and pierce it by striking it with the bill. In the same manner they work their way into nuts and almonds."

The Blue Titmouse, more familiarly called the Tomtit, is about four inches and a half in length. The crown of the head is blue, terminated by a line of dirty white; the back yellowish green; the under parts of the body pale yellow; a narrow line of black passes from the bill on each side to the back of the head, and another of dark blue from the throat to the hinder part of the neck. The tail and wings display a mixture of black, blue, and white.

"The Blue Titmouse," says White, "is a great frequenter of houses and a general devourer. Besides insects it is very fond of flesh, for it frequently picks bones on dunghills: it is a vast admirer of suet, and haunts butchers' shops. When a boy, I have known twenty caught in a morning with snap mousetraps, baited with tallow or suet. It will also pick holes in apples left on the ground, and be well entertained with the seeds in the head of a sunflower." It visits the farmyard, and is fond of oats, which it plucks out; and, retiring to a neighbouring bush, fixes the grain between its claws, and hammers with its bill to break the husk. No bird attacks the Owl in the day-time with greater fierceness than the Tomtit, which buffets its solemn-looking adversary, erects its feathers, screams for aid, and expresses its rage in every possible way.

The Tomtit is considered by gardeners as particularly injurious, and in consequence per-

secuted by them without mercy, because it picks off the defective buds of fruit-trees in search of insects. But, were they carefully to examine the fragments of the buds, which in this search the birds scatter about the ground, they would observe that each had been pierced by an insect, which alone was the object of pursuit. These insects would not only have destroyed the buds, which they had immediately attacked, but would have given birth to a number of others equally injurious with themselves. The Titmouse, therefore, in picking off such buds as contain them, ought to be considered the preserver, rather than the destroyer of fruit. Knapp, after remarking on the hard usage experienced by the Tomtit on account of this habit, says, "It peeps into the nail-holes of our walls, which, though closed by the cobwebs, will not secrete the spider within; and draws out the chrysalis of the cabbage butterfly from the chinks of the barn."

The Tomtit forms its nest in holes of trees or walls, which it lines well with feathers, laying from fourteen to twenty white eggs spotted with red. If the nest should be touched, or one of the eggs broken, the female will forsake her nest and build afresh, otherwise she makes but one hatch in a year. So obstinately does she defend her nest, however, that she will often suffer herself to be caught rather than quit it, and frequently return to it after being taken out. She threatens every intruder, erecting her feathers, and making a noise like the spitting of a cat, at the same time biting severely if handled.

The Tomtit has no song, but utters a shrill note that is quickly repeated. Three species of the Titmouse, distinguished by having black heads, are remarkable for uttering a note that exactly resembles the setting of a saw. Slaney says that he has often watched the great Black-headed Titmouse emitting this grating sound,

which ceases when it has a nest, and seems to foretell rain.

SPARROW.

This well-known bird is about six inches in length. As seen in large smoky towns, it has generally a dirty unpleasing appearance; but, among barns and stack-yards, the male is far from being the least beautiful of British birds. The upper parts of the body are a reddish brown mixed with black; the breast and all the under parts pale ash; the top of the head and back part of the neck ash grey; the throat, fore part of the neck, and space round the eyes, black. In the female, the black patch on the throat is wanting. The sparrow, however, is subject to great varieties of colour. In the British Museum there are several white ones, with yellow bills and eyes; others more

or less mixed with brown, and some entirely black.

In all countries the Sparrow frequents the dwellings alike of the rich and the poor, and is rarely seen far from the habitations of men; granaries, barns, court-yards, pigeon-houses, and in short all places where grain is scattered, being its favourite resorts. Hence no bird more frequently meets the eye than this; and if it does not charm the ear by its voice, it amuses by its familiarity and craftiness, easily distinguishing the snares laid to entrap it. In autumn the Sparrows assemble in large flocks, often mix with other birds, and not unfrequently share the meal of the pigeons and poultry, in spite of every precaution to prevent them. Though the note of the Sparrow in a wild state is only a chirp, this does not arise from want of powers in the bird to imitate others, but is owing to his paying attention only to the parental note. To prove this de-

cisively, Daines Barrington took a Sparrow from the nest when he was fledged, and educated him under a Linnet. The bird, however, by accident heard a Goldfinch also, and his song was a mixture of the notes of the Linnet and Goldfinch.

The nests of Sparrows are interesting from their adaptation to the locality in which they are placed. These birds nestle in holes under the tiles of houses, and in the thatch of barns, or build near the tops of trees. When a hole is selected, a bed is first formed of coarse straw, hay, moss, or similar materials, over which the birds lay feathers, wool, cotton, or whatever they can find to suit their purpose; always proportioning the quantity of materials to the size of the hole, in which they merely leave sufficient room to hatch and rear their young. When the nest is built on a tree, a high and exposed branch is selected, as if the birds were more anxious to be out of the reach of cats

than of cold winds. In this case it is always about a foot in diameter, and they invariably form over it a dome of straw, piled together in the same loose, inartificial style as the rest of the structure; an entrance being left in the side sufficient to admit the birds. Even when Sparrows build in the ivied wall of a house, as they frequently do, they are not content with the shelter of the thickly clustering leaves, but construct a dome of straw, though slighter than in nests built in the exposed branches of trees. The female lays five or six eggs, of a reddish white spotted with brown; and has generally three broods in a year, which accounts for the great multiplication of the species.

The Sparrow, though a most industrious nest-builder, is in the habit of seizing any convenience it can find adapted to its purpose, whether it be accidental or belong to some other bird. Thus it frequently appropriates

to itself the holes which the Bank Swallow has taken the trouble to burrow in a bank. It is also fond of associating with Rooks upon the loftiest elms, where one who had previously seen it burrowing in a sandpit among Swallows, or creeping like a mouse under the tiles or thatch of a house, would not expect to find it. In such situations, however, Sparrows are frequently observed rearing their young close to the Rooks, who seem to take no offence at their proximity. A Sparrow, indeed, never ventures to occupy, at least during the breeding season, the interior of any Rook's nest which has not been abandoned; and is content with building under shelter of the larger structure, either immediately below it or to leeward: but, in winter, when the Rooks do not come to the rookery, the Sparrows are less ceremonious, and roost in the warmest nests they can select.

Sparrows, like other gregarious birds, always

have a sentinel stationed near them while feeding, whose office it is to give timely alarm of any approaching danger. Thus, when a flock of Sparrows alight on the margin of a wheat-field, one, or perhaps several, may be observed perched on some elevated station in the adjacent hedge-row, watching every movement of men or animals within sight. The moment he perceives any cause for alarm, he gives the well-known signal, at which the whole troop hurry away with the utmost despatch: if they ascertain that there is no immediate danger, they return to finish their repast.

In towns, Sparrows are obliged to be still more cautious and vigilant. There they rarely assemble in any great number, but more commonly in foraging parties of two to half a dozen, particularly haunting stables to pick up oats or grass seeds that have fallen from hay. Rennie gives a lively picture of the manners of these citizen Sparrows. "When they have disco-

vered a scattering of oats," says he, "they seldom fly directly to the spot, but take several turns around it, as if to ascertain the safest point of approach. If it is near the wall, they will cling, with their heads downward, to rough projections of the mortar, or to an accidental crevice between the bricks, looking round the while with the utmost caution; and thus will they descend the wall by little and little, till within a few feet of their wished-for prize, upon which they will pounce down one or more at a time, and carry off a mouthful to the nearest roof, where they can eat it in leisure and safety. Though each individual of the party manifests such extraordinary caution, they have usually the farther safeguard of a sentinel, stationed on some adjacent projection, or a window, who fails not to announce to his companions below the approach of every passenger, and particularly of every cat that endeavours to steal upon them unawares."

Every evening, before they retire to their roosting-places, Sparrows assemble on some tree or house-top hard by, where they squabble and shift their places for a considerable time, and then drop off one by one, as though they had settled the point of precedence.

In the spring great havoc is made among the Sparrows and other small birds by the farmer, and rewards are sometimes offered for their destruction by the parish authorities,—a proof how ignorant the generality of mankind are of their own interest. This order of birds includes not fewer than forty different species which eat not a single grain of corn, but which, in the course of the spring and summer, devour millions of insects, that would otherwise prove infinitely more injurious to the farmer than all the Sparrows that haunt his fields, were they ten times more numerous than they are. Even with respect to Sparrows, which are certainly in some measure injurious to the crops, were

the farmer seriously to reflect that the Almighty has not formed any race of beings whatever without giving to them an important destination, he would probably not be so anxious for their destruction. It has been satisfactorily ascertained that a single pair of common Sparrows destroy on an average above three thousand caterpillars every week while their young ones are in the nest. At this rate, if all the species of small birds were to be extirpated, what would become of the crops ?

STARLING.

From the striking similarity both in form and manners observable in the Starling and the Pie tribe, it seems to form a connecting link between them and the Thrushes. It is about nine inches in length ; the whole plumage black, glossed with green, blue, purple,

and copper, but each feather tipped with a pale yellow spot.

Starlings are frolicsome, chattering, noisy birds, and so fond of society, that they not only congregate in great numbers, but also join birds of a different kind, being frequently seen in company with Redwings, Fieldfares, and even Rooks, Daws, and Pigeons. They subsist chiefly on worms, snails, and caterpillars; they also eat various kinds of berries, seeds, and grain; are said to be very fond of cherries, and will break and suck the eggs of other birds.

The Starling makes an artless nest in the hollows of trees, rocks, or old walls, and sometimes in cliffs overhanging the sea; sometimes, too, it takes possession of the nest of another bird. The female lays four or five eggs of a pale greenish ash. It is one of those birds which manifest particular assiduity in providing for their young. "I have observed a pair,"

says Knapp, "in constant progress before me, having young ones in the hole of a neighbouring poplar-tree; and they have been probably this way in action from the opening of the morning; thus persisting in this labour of love for twelve or thirteen hours in the day. The space they pass over in their various transits and returns must be very great, and the calculation vague; yet, from some rude observations, it appears probable that this pair in conjunction do not travel less than fifty miles in the day, visiting and feeding their young about a hundred and forty times, which, consisting of five in number, and admitting only one to be fed each time, every bird must receive in this period eight-and-twenty portions of food or water."

Like Sparrows and other birds which roost in holes, Starlings huddle closely together and squabble for places. The evening is the time when they assemble in the greatest numbers,

and betake themselves to the fens and marshes, where they roost among the reeds, chattering much both then and in the morning when they disperse. "There is something," remarks Mr. Knapp, "singularly curious and mysterious in the conduct of these birds previous to their nightly retirement, by the variety and the intricacy of the evolutions they execute at that time. They will form themselves perhaps into a triangle, then shoot into a long pear-shaped figure, expand like a sheet, wheel into a ball, as Pliny observes, each individual striving to get into the centre, with a promptitude more like parade movements than the actions of birds."

The Starling is one of those birds which readily learn to imitate the human voice. Sterne's story of the Starling, and his pathetic complaint of "I can't get out," are too well known to be quoted. A later writer, Mr. Syme, in his "British Song Birds," tells us,

that he "went one morning with a friend to see a collection of birds belonging to a gentleman in Edinburgh, and among these were some very fine Starlings, one in particular which cost five guineas. Breakfast was ready before we entered the room. When the bird was produced, it flew to its master's hand, and distinctly pronounced, 'Good morning, sir,—breakfast—breakfast!' It afterwards hopped to the table, examined every cup, and, while thus employed, it occasionally repeated, 'Breakfast—breakfast—bread and butter for Jack—tea—tea—bread for Jack—pretty Jack—pretty Jack!' We observed that it often said the same word or sentence twice over, perhaps in imitation of the person by whom it had been taught."

BUSTARD.

The Bustard, the largest British land bird, is about four feet long, the male weighing from twenty to thirty pounds, and the female ten or twelve. With such characters as connect it with the birds of the gallinaceous kind, it possesses others which seem to ally it to the Ostrich and the Cassowary. The bill is strong, and on each side of the root of the lower mandible is a tuft of feathers about nine inches long. The head and neck are ash-coloured; the back barred transversely with black and bright rusty on a pale reddish ground; the belly white. The legs are long, like the neck, naked above the knees, and have no hind toe, instead of which the bottom of the foot is furnished with a callous prominence. The female has no tuft on the side of the head; her colours are less bright than those of the

COCK.

TURKEY. BUSTARD.

male, and she is not much more than half his size. Another essential difference between them consists in a bag or pouch, with which the male is furnished: it is situated in the fore part of the neck, the entrance to it being immediately under the tongue, and it is capable of holding two quarts. Dr. Douglas, who first discovered this singular reservoir, conjectures that the bird fills it with water as a supply amidst the extensive plains which it frequents. It applies it also in self-defence against the attacks of birds of prey, when it throws out the water with such force as to baffle the pursuit of its enemy.

The Bustard is now a scarce bird in Britain, being found only in the open countries of the south and east, in the extensive plains of Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, and some parts of Yorkshire. It is granivorous, but feeds also on various herbs and berries that grow among the heath, and upon the worms which in summer come

out of the ground in great numbers before sunrise. It has also been known to make prize of frogs, mice, and young birds of the smaller kinds, which it swallows whole. Like the Ostrich, it swallows small stones, bits of metal, and the like. In the stomach of a Bustard opened by the French academicians, were found not only a quantity of small stones, but about ninety doubloons, worn and polished by the action of the stomach.

The wings of this bird are not adapted for perfect flight, being not more than four feet in their expansion; so that, though it can raise itself from the ground, it flies with difficulty. It runs, however, with so much the greater speed; and when young is sometimes hunted down and taken by greyhounds: for these birds can rarely be shot, as they have always sentinels stationed in proper places to warn them of approaching danger.

The female builds no nest, but makes a hole

in the ground, into which she drops two eggs, about the size of those of a goose, of a pale olive brown with dark spots. If during her absence from the nest in quest of food any one should handle or only breathe upon her eggs, she immediately forsakes them.

The flesh of the Bustard, particularly that of the young, when kept a sufficient time, is excellent eating.

COCK.

We may assert without fear of contradiction, that no species of bird is more useful to mankind than the common Cock and Hen; which have been so long domesticated in all parts of the world, that it would be impossible to trace them back to their primitive stock. It seems probable, however, that they were originally natives of India, where, and in the islands of

the Indian seas, they are still found in a wild state.

The varieties of these birds in size and colour are innumerable; and their general appearance must be so well known even to the juvenile observer, that we might dispense with any particular account of them, were not Bewick's description of the British Game Cock so characteristic that we cannot forbear copying it.

"The appearance of the Game Cock when in his full plumage is strikingly beautiful and animated. His head, which is small, is adorned with a beautiful red comb, and his chin and throat with wattles. His eyes sparkle with fire, and his whole demeanour bespeaks boldness and freedom. The feathers on his neck are long, slender, and pointed, and fall gracefully upon his body, which is thick, muscular, and compact. His tail is long, and the flexile feathers which fall over it form an elegant arch, which gives a grace to all his motions.

His legs are strong, and armed with sharp spurs, with which he defends himself and attacks his adversary; laying hold with his beak, and striking with his feet and wings. He is extremely attentive to the hens, hardly ever losing sight of them. He leads, defends, and cherishes them, collects them together when they straggle, and seems to eat unwillingly till he sees them feeding around him." Whenever a strange cock appears in his domain, he immediately attacks the intruder, and if possible drives him away.

The Hen has neither the comb, the wattles, nor the gracefully curving tail-feathers which distinguish the Cock. Her fecundity is very great: when abundantly supplied with food, she generally lays two eggs in three days, and continues to lay during the greater part of the year, excepting the time of moulting, which lasts about two months. After she has laid ten or twelve eggs, she prepares for the anxious

task of sitting, and plainly indicates her wants by her cries, clucking, and the violence of her emotions. If deprived of her own eggs, she will cover and hatch the eggs of other birds; and it is not uncommon to make her sit upon those of the Duck. In this occupation she displays the most affectionate solicitude: she covers her eggs with her body and wings, fosters them with a genial warmth, and gently turns them that all parts may be properly heated. She seems fully aware of the importance of her employment, on which she is so intent that she almost neglects to take food on account of it. The young brood make their appearance in twenty-one days; and then the Hen, though by nature timid and apt to flee from the meanest assailant, surrounded by her offspring, is fearless of danger, and will fly in the face of the fiercest animal that offers to annoy her.

It is a curious circumstance in the history

of this bird, that, in Egypt, a method of hatching eggs by artificial heat is practised, and thus six or seven thousand chickens are produced at a time. The spring there being milder than our summer, the young brood thrives very well. In our cold and variable climate this plan could not be followed with success; for though the birds might be hatched without difficulty, still the greatest part of them would probably perish soon after their exclusion from the shell, for want of the attentions of a mother.

Among the endless varieties of this species, the English Game Cock stands unrivalled for its invincible courage, and on this account it is employed in the barbarous sport of cock-fighting, formerly a favourite diversion with persons of the highest rank in this country, but now happily of very rare occurrence. Both the Greeks and Romans were fond of this pastime; and the Chinese and the inhabitants of some

of the great Asiatic islands at the present day are so addicted to it, that they will sometimes stake not only their whole property, but even their wives and children, on the issue of a battle.

The Cock is an extremely vigilant bird, crowing frequently in the night, especially in moonlight nights, as well as in the day, at the same time clapping his wings. The Hen, after laying, has a peculiar note of exultation; and the clucking with which she calls and directs her chickens is too well known to need describing.

TURKEY.

It is generally admitted that this important inmate of the poultry-yard was originally brought from North America, in the extensive forests of which it still dwells, roosting on the highest trees, and feeding on nuts, acorns, and

insects. The wild are considerably larger than the tame Turkeys; and in that state they are gregarious, associating in flocks, sometimes of five hundred.

Tame Turkeys, like all other domestic animals, differ greatly in regard to colour: the prevailing one is dark grey, inclining to black, with a little white toward the ends of the feathers. Others are black and white. There is also a beautiful variety of a fine deep copper colour. In all these breeds the male is distinguished by a tuft of black feathers on the breast, a bare red carunculated head and neck, and a fleshy dilatable appendage hanging over the bill.

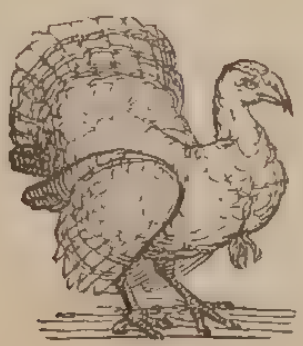
Turkey cocks among themselves are very fierce and quarrelsome, though usually timid and cowardly towards other animals. Their motions, when enraged, are very similar to those of the Peacock. In this case the Turkey erects his tail, spreads it like a fan, at the same

time trailing his wings on the ground, and making a singular inward noise which shakes the whole body. He struts round and round with a solemn pace, every now and then bursting out into a loud inharmonious gurgle.

The Hen begins to lay early in spring; she is very attentive to the business of hatching, and will produce fifteen or sixteen chicks at a time, but rarely has more than one brood in a season in this country. It is a singular circumstance, that though the Turkey is found in great plenty in the forests of Canada, which are covered with snow nearly three-fourths of the year, yet it is not reared here without difficulty. Young Turkeys are extremely tender, and require great attention, being subject to various diseases from cold, rain, and dew: nay, the sun itself, when its rays are powerful, is said to occasion their almost instant death.

The flesh of the Turkey, as everybody knows, is delicate eating. Notwithstanding

the tenderness of their constitution when young, they become hardy as they grow up, and maintain themselves with little trouble and expense to the farmer. Great numbers are bred in the eastern counties, especially Norfolk, whence they are driven to the London markets in flocks of several hundreds. The drivers manage them with ease, by means of a bit of red rag tied to a long rod; which, owing to the antipathy of the birds to that colour, effectually drives them forward. When fat, Turkeys frequently weigh from twenty to thirty pounds. They form a very common dish at our Christmas festivities.



PEACOCK.

Peacocks, like the common domestic fowl, were originally brought from India, where they are still sometimes found in a wild state, of superior size and beauty. The species is now diffused over every part of the world.

It is scarcely possible by description to convey an adequate conception of the beauties of this bird to persons who have never seen it. "Its matchless plumage," observes Buffon, "seems to combine all that delights the eye in the soft and delicate tints of the finest flowers, all that dazzles it in the sparkling lustre of gems, all that astonishes it in the grand display of the rainbow." The head is adorned with a tuft of twenty-four feathers, the slender shafts of which are furnished with webs only at the ends, painted with the most exquisite green mixed with gold. The head,

throat, neck, and breast, are of a deep blue glossed with gold; the back, of the same tinged with bronze; but the distinguishing character of this bird is his train, which rises just above the tail: the two middle feathers are sometimes four feet and a half long, the others gradually diminishing on each side. The shafts, which are white, are furnished from their origin nearly to the end with filaments of varying colours, ending in a flat vane decorated with what is called "the eye." This is a brilliant spot, enamelled with the most enchanting colours; yellow gilded with various shades; green running into blue and bright violet, varying according to its different positions; and the lustre of the whole heightened by the black crescent-shaped spot in the centre. When pleased, the bird erects this train, which then forms an immense fan of the most resplendent hues. At such times he struts about with

slow and dignified pace and movements, sometimes turning gracefully round, as if to catch the sunbeams in every direction, and to produce new colours of inconceivable richness, and making a hollow murmuring noise. His cry at other times is a harsh scream, which is frequently repeated, especially in summer evenings.

The Pea hen is not so large as the cock, and, though she has both a train and crest, her plumage is destitute of those dazzling beauties which distinguish the male. She lays five or six whitish eggs in some secret spot, for the purpose of concealing them from the male, who, if he discovers the place, is apt to break them; and she sits from twenty-five to thirty days, according to the warmth of the season. In our climate they require great care in rearing, and their plumage does not attain its full beauty till the third year. The females, when past laying, have sometimes been known to

assume the appearance of the male by a total change of colour.

The Pea-fowl, like the rest of the poultry kind, feed chiefly on grain, and are particularly fond of barley. They eagerly seek also for insects; but in case of an insufficient supply, one of these birds will, by devouring young and tender plants, frustrate the labours of the gardener by destroying in a day the work of many months. It is said to live about twenty years.

A white variety of the Peacock is not uncommon: in this the eyes of the train are barely visible, and may be traced by a different degree of shade on the pure white of the tail.

In former times the flesh of these birds was considered as a delicacy, and it formed part of the luxurious entertainments of the Roman voluptuaries. They are now very rarely brought to table, being kept almost exclusively about the mansions of the wealthy, solely on account of the beauty of their appearance.

GUINEA FOWL.

The Guinea Fowl, called also the Pintada and Pearled Hen, came originally from Africa; and there seems to be little doubt that it was introduced, as its name indeed implies, from Guinea. It is somewhat larger than the common Hen. The general colour of the plumage is dark bluish grey, sprinkled with round white spots of different sizes resembling pearls, whence it has received one of its names. The head is bare of feathers, and covered with a naked bluish skin. On the top is a callous conical protuberance, and at the base of the lower mandible on each side hangs a loose wattle, which in the female is red and in the male bluish. The upper part of the neck is almost naked. The back of this bird is arched, the wings short, and the tail pointing downward.

The female lays a great number of eggs, smaller, rounder, and having a thicker shell than those of the common Hen: these she frequently deposits in some secret place, where she may hatch them undisturbed. The eggs, as well as the flesh of the birds themselves, are delicious eating.

The Guinea Fowl subsists on the same kind of food as the common Hen, and, like the latter, scrapes the ground and rolls in the dust to rid itself of insects. It is a restless, clamorous bird, with a harsh grating voice, resembling the sound of a rusty hinge, and an often repeated call, fancifully supposed to be like "Come back, come back, come back." It roosts at night on high places, and, if disturbed, alarms everything within hearing by its unceasing cries.

PHEASANT.

Of all our British birds the Pheasant ranks next to the Peacock for the beauty of its plumage. It is said to have been brought originally from the banks of the Phasis, a river of Colchis, in Asia Minor, by the Argonauts. Exclusively of the tail, it is about eighteen inches long, and weighs from two pounds and a half to three and a quarter. The eyes are surrounded with a ring of scarlet speckled with black, and the iris is yellow. The fore part of the head is clothed with blackish feathers, mixed with shining purple; and the top of the head and the upper part of the neck are tinged with a darkish green, which has a silky gloss. The top of the head in some is of a shining blue, and the upper part of the neck appears sometimes blue and sometimes green, according to the light in which

it is viewed. The feathers of the breast, the middle of the back, and the sides under the wings, have a blackish ground; and their edges are tinged with an exquisitely beautiful colour, which appears sometimes black and sometimes purple, according to the different reflections of the light; and under the purple there is a transverse streak of gold colour. The two middle feathers of the tail are about eighteen inches long, the shortest on each side about five, of a reddish brown crossed with black bars. The legs are furnished with spurs, and, with the feet, are of a dusky hue.

The female is smaller, and does not exhibit that variety and brilliancy of plumage which distinguish the male: her general colours are light and dark brown, mixed with black; the breast and belly finely freckled with small black spots on a light ground; the tail is short, but barred, somewhat like that of the Cock; and the part round the eye is covered with

feathers. The hen, after she has done breeding, is sometimes known to assume the garb of the male.

The Pheasant is fond of the shelter of thickets and woods where the grass is long. The hen forms her nest on the ground, frequently in clover-fields, but carefully conceals it from the male: it is usually composed of dry vegetables put carelessly together. She lays from twelve to fifteen olive-coloured eggs, which are smaller than those of the common Hen; and the young follow the mother like chickens, as soon as they break the shell. The parents and their brood remain in the stubble and the hedgerows, if undisturbed, for some time after the corn is ripe; but, if disturbed, they repair to the woods, coming forth only in the morning and evening to feed in the stubble. Though very fond of corn, they are frequently obliged to be content with acorns and wild berries.

In confinement the hen neither lays so many

eggs, nor hatches and rears her brood with so much care, as in the fields; indeed, she will then rarely form any nest or sit on her eggs at all: the duty of hatching and rearing the young is therefore entrusted to the domestic Hen.

The wings of the Pheasant are very short, and not adapted for long flights. At the approach of the cold weather, these birds begin to fly at sunset among the branches of the oak-trees, for the purpose of roosting during the night. The male birds at these times make a noise, which they repeat three or four times, and which the sportsmen call cocketing: the hens, on flying up, utter one shrill whistle, and then are silent. By these notes poachers are guided to their retreats; and unless the woods are strictly watched, they secure the birds with the greatest certainty. In the pairing season, in March and April, the males betray themselves by crowing and clapping

their wings, which may be heard to a considerable distance.

The flesh of the Pheasant is justly regarded as one of the greatest dainties, and its wholesomeness is equal to its delicacy.

A variety of this bird, with a white ring round its neck, thence called the Ring Pheasant, is not uncommon in some parts of England. In this species the colours of the plumage are in general more vivid and distinct than in the common sort.

PARTRIDGE.

Few birds are so universally diffused in every country and in every climate as the Partridge. It is about thirteen inches in length, and weighs about a pound. The general colour of its plumage is brown and ash, mixed with black; each feather streaked down the

middle with buff. The male has on the breast a crescent of a deep chestnut. The tail is short and drooping. The colours of the female are not so vivid as those of the male.

Partridges are chiefly found in temperate climates, but nowhere in such abundance as in England. They haunt corn-fields, and are never found at any great distance from arable land. The female lays from fourteen to twenty eggs, making her nest of grass or dry leaves upon the ground. It is not uncommon to introduce Partridges' eggs under the common Hen, who hatches and rears the young brood as her own: in this case it is necessary to feed them with ants' eggs, which are their favourite food, and without which it is almost impossible to bring them up. The young birds learn to run as soon as they are hatched, frequently encumbered with part of the shell sticking to them, and picking up slugs, grain, ants, and other insects. While the corn is

standing, they have a secure retreat from their numerous enemies; but when the harvest is gathered in, they resort in the day-time to groves and covers. At night, however, they return to the stubble, to avoid foxes, weasels, and other foes, and there nestle together. From man they have no means of escape; for they are traced to their hiding-places by pointers, and are often enclosed in nets and taken by whole coveys.

The affection of the Partridge for her young is peculiarly strong. She is greatly assisted in the care of rearing them by her mate. They lead them out in common, call them together, point out to them their proper food, and assist them in finding it by scratching the ground with their feet: they frequently sit close by each other, covering the chickens with their wings like the Hen. In this situation they are not easily flushed; and the sportsman who is attentive to the preservation of his game will

carefully avoid giving any disturbance to a scene so truly interesting. Should the pointer, however, come too near, or unfortunately run in upon them, the male first gives the signal of alarm by a peculiar cry of distress, throwing himself at the same moment more immediately in the way of danger, in order to deceive or mislead the enemy. He flies or rather runs along the ground, hanging his wings, and exhibiting every symptom of weakness, in order to decoy the dog to a distance from the covey.

The female flies off in a contrary direction, and to a greater distance; but, returning soon afterwards by secret ways, she finds her scattered brood closely squatted among the grass; and, collecting them in haste, she leads them from the danger before the dog has had time to return from his pursuit.

Markwick relates an instance of the artifices occasionally employed by the Partridge for the protection of her young. One day, as he was

hunting with a young pointer, the dog ran on a brood of very small Partridges. The mother immediately cried, fluttered, and ran trembling along before the dog's nose, till she had drawn him to a considerable distance; when she took to wing, and flew farther off, but not out of the field. The pointer then returned nearly to the place where the young lay concealed; on which the old bird flew back again, and repeated her artifice of rolling and tumbling about before the dog's nose, till she succeeded in diverting his attention, and thus preserved her helpless progeny.

There are many species of the Partridge, which, however, may be arranged in two grand divisions, the Red and the Grey: the former, which is the largest, often perches on trees; the latter, which is the most common in this country, always sits on the ground.

RED GROUSE.

The Grouse family comprehends about seventeen species, all of which are distinguished from the poultry kind by a patch of scarlet skin above the eye, the massive bulkiness of their bodies, and their feathered legs and toes. The largest species of this family, the Wood Grouse, is about the size of a Turkey, and weighs from ten to fifteen pounds. The Black Grouse is of the size of a common Hen, and weighs about four pounds. Both these species are become extremely rare in Great Britain.

The Red Grouse, fifteen inches long, and weighing about a pound and a half, is very plentiful in the wild, heathy, and mountainous tracts, in the northern counties of England and Wales, and particularly in the Highlands of Scotland. The throat is red; each eye is

arched with a large naked spot of bright scarlet; the whole upper part of the body is beautifully mottled with deep red and black, producing the appearance of tortoise-shell; the breast and belly are of a purplish hue, crossed with small dusky lines; and the legs are clothed with soft white feathers down to the claws, which are strong and of a light colour. This bird is believed to be peculiar to Britain.

The Red Grouse never resort to woods, but confine themselves to the open moors, feeding on the mountain and bog berries, and, for want of these, on the tops of heath. The female lays eight or ten eggs on the ground. The young keep with the parent birds till towards winter. In November they associate together in flocks of forty or fifty, when they are extremely shy and difficult of approach. Their flesh is exquisitely delicate.

SUMMER VISITERS.

These, says Slaney, in his pleasing volume on the Smaller British Birds, come to us in the spring, as the weather becomes warmer, the earth clothed with vegetation, and the air and the surface of the ground begin to teem with insect life: when the chrysalis bursts its case; when the worm, and slug, and caterpillar, and "every creeping thing after his kind," come forth; then appear, led by an unseen hand, myriads of soft-billed warblers from distant lands, formed to thin the insect race, and whose services warmly deserve our gratitude and protection. From March till May ten thousand busy pinions bring these melodious visiters from the southern countries. About twenty song birds of passage come to us and rear their young in our island, retiring

again in the autumn, when the numbers of the insect tribes begin rapidly to diminish.

NIGHTINGALE.

This bird, which is universally admitted to hold the first place among British songsters, is not equally distinguished for its plumage. It is about the size of the Skylark, but of a more elegant form. The whole upper part of the body is of a rusty brown tinged with olive, and the under parts are pale ash, approaching in some places to white.

The Nightingale makes its appearance in this country about the middle of April, the males arriving eight or ten days before the females: a circumstance of which the bird-catchers do not fail to avail themselves.

Although common in England, it never visits the northern parts of our island, and is

NIGHTINGALE.

CUCKOO.

BLACKCAP.

SWALLOW.

CROSSBILL.

SNIPE.

WOODCOCK.

but rarely seen in the western counties of Cornwall and Devonshire. It leaves us some time in August, and is supposed to visit during its absence the distant regions of Asia. This is probable, as these birds do not winter in any part of Europe; neither does it appear that they make any stay in Africa; but they are seen at all times in India, Persia, China, and Japan. Perhaps it is because the Nightingale is not a permanent resident with us that we value its delightful song the more highly. It never unites in flocks, like many of the smaller birds, but hides itself in the thickest part of copses, and sings, not in the night only, as it is vulgarly believed, but all night and all day.

The Nightingale has been characterized by our poets as a melancholy bird: it is nevertheless, in fact, a cheerful bird, and, as Martial calls it, the most garrulous of all our singing birds. Its notes, strong and sonorous, mild

and mellow, are in the greatest degree enlivening when heard at highest noon; and only pensive and melancholy when all Nature is lulled to repose and our feelings are hushed to silence; when every sound, whether of the woods, the distant chimings of a cathedral, or the rolling of remote waters, come at intervals on the ear and produce nearly the same emotions as the notes of the Nightingale itself. It is from association that this bird derives most of its power of disposing the heart to melancholy impressions. Cheerful and happy itself, it has, aided by the gloom and silence of night, power to draw tears from all that listen to its warblings. Walton, a writer of genuine feeling and classical simplicity, has celebrated the song of this bird with the truest measure of applause. "He that at midnight, when the very labourers sleep securely, should hear, as I have heard, the clear air, the sweet descants, the natural rising and falling, the

doubling and redoubling of her voice, might well be lifted above earth and say, 'Lord, what music hast thou provided for thy saints in heaven, when thou affordest bad men such music on earth!'"

So various, sweet, and continued are the notes of this bird, that the song of most other warblers, taken in its utmost extent, appears contemptible when compared with that of the Nightingale. His variety seems inexhaustible; for he never repeats the same notes; or, if the same bar be heard twice, it is always in a different key and with new embellishments. He begins with feeble, timid, and indecisive tones, as if to try his instrument; by degrees he assumes more confidence, becomes gradually more warm and animated, till, at last, he captivates and overwhelms the listener by the full exertion of his astonishing powers.

In England, Nightingales frequent thick hedges and low coppices, and generally keep

in the middle of the bush, so that they are very rarely seen. Though a very small bird, his voice is heard farther than the human, being distinguished in a calm night at the distance of almost a mile around the bush where he sits.

The Nightingale feeds principally on insects, small worms, ants' eggs, and sometimes on berries of various kinds. It begins to build about the end of April or the beginning of May, selecting the lower part of a thick bush or hedge for the situation of the nest, which is composed of dry grass and leaves, intermixed with small fibrous roots, and lined with hair, down, and other soft substances. The female lays four or five eggs of a greenish brown colour; and while she is engaged in the duty of hatching, her mate at no great distance entertains her with his delightful melody; but no sooner does the young brood make its appearance, than he ceases singing and joins her in providing supplies for their offspring.

CUCKOO.

Out of more than fifty species belonging to this genus of birds, one only visits and is bred in Great Britain. This is the bird whose well-known singular note, from which its name is derived, is perhaps never heard without exciting feelings of pleasure, as announcing the approach of summer.

The Cuckoo is about fourteen inches in length, and twenty-five across the expanded wings. All the upper parts are a pale blue, darkest on the head and back; and the under parts white, crossed with wavy bars of black. It arrives here early in the spring; the note of the male being heard about the middle of April, and ceasing by the end of June; and early in July the old birds again leave this country.

The Cuckoo feeds principally upon hairy

caterpillars, snails, May-bugs, and grasshoppers, disgorging the hard parts after digestion in the same manner as birds of prey. It is said to eat also the eggs of other birds.

This species forms a singular exception to the general economy of birds, inasmuch as it constructs no nest; the female depositing her eggs (of which she lays from four to six in the season) singly in the nests of other birds, by which they are hatched. For this purpose she generally prefers the nests of the Hedge-Sparrow or the Titlark; but her eggs have also been found in those of the Water-wagtail, Yellowhammer, Green Linnet, and Whinchat. We owe to the observations and experiments of the late Dr. Jenner the first satisfactory account of this deviation from the ordinary course of nature.

The egg of the Cuckoo is much smaller than that of any other bird of the same size; hence no great disparity is perceived when

it is placed in the nest of the little dupes who hatch it. While the Hedge-Sparrow is laying her eggs, which generally takes up four or five days, the Cuckoo contrives to deposit her egg among the rest, and bestows no farther care upon it. This intrusion frequently causes great discomposure; for the Hedge-Sparrow, while sitting, not only throws out at intervals some of her own eggs, but injures others in such a way that they become addle, so that not more than two or three are hatched along with that of the Cuckoo; but what is very remarkable, she never throws out or injures the latter. Her own young ones and such of the eggs as remain unhatched are soon turned out by the young Cuckoo, who remains in full possession of the nest, and becomes the sole object of the care of its foster-parents. The mode of accomplishing this ejectment is curious. The Cuckoo, very soon after it is hatched, and consequently while it is yet blind,

contrives with its rump and wings to get the Hedge-Sparrow, or the egg, upon its back, and, making a lodgment for its burden by elevating its elbows, it clambers with it up the side of the nest till it reaches the top, where resting for a moment, it throws its load over with a jerk. After remaining for some time in this situation, and feeling about with the extremities of its wings, as if to ascertain that the business has been properly executed, it drops into the nest again.

When, as it sometimes happens, two Cuckoo's eggs are deposited in the same nest, and hatched along with those of the Hedge-Sparrow, a contest commences in a few hours between the young Cuckoos for the possession of the nest. In one of these contests, which was continued for more than a day, the combatants appeared by turns to have the advantage, each having carried the other several times to the edge of the nest, and then sunk beneath its

burden; till at last one, which was somewhat superior in size, turned out the other, together with a young Hedge-Sparrow and an unhatched egg. It has been calculated that the number of the eggs of insect-eating birds thus destroyed annually in England and Wales by the Cuckoo amounts to three millions and a half; but the data on which such a calculation is founded must be extremely uncertain.

The young Cuckoos, which differ so much in appearance from the old ones as to have been sometimes mistaken for a different species, are very fierce and pugnacious. They begin to fly in about three weeks; and their foster-parents continue to feed them for five weeks longer. They migrate, to what country we know not, about the end of August or the beginning of September.

SWALLOW.

This family of our summer visiters comprehends four species, all differing from one another in plumage and habits. These are the Chimney Swallow, the House Martin, the Sand Martin, and the Swift. They arrive in this country in the order here mentioned; the first making its appearance soon after the spring equinox, and the last being seldom seen till May. The Swift is nevertheless the first to leave us, which it does about the middle of August; the Chimney Swallow departs about the end of September, the House Martin about the middle of October, and the Sand Martin soon afterwards.

The Chimney Swallow is distinguished by the blue black of the upper part of the body, black breast, white belly, and a very long and much forked tail. It is about six inches long.

The House Martin is somewhat smaller; it is known by its white breast, its shorter and less forked tail than the Swallow, and the white downy feathers which cover the legs to the very claws. The Sand Martin, the smallest as well as the least numerous variety, is of a mouse colour on the upper parts of the body and breast, and white on the under parts. The Swift, the largest of the Swallow tribes, being about eight inches long, is all over of a sooty black, excepting the throat, which is white; its wings are very long, and the tail much forked. It is remarkable for its loud shrill prolonged cry, uttered while on the wing, which has obtained for it in some parts of England the name of Devil-screamer. The note of the other three species is only a kind of twitter.

The Swallow, like the Robin, is a universal favourite. "The Swallow," says Sir H. Davy, "is one of my favourite birds, and a rival of

the Nightingale, for he glads my sense of seeing as much as the other does my sense of hearing. He is the joyous prophet of the year, the harbinger of the best season; he lives a life of enjoyment among the loveliest forms of nature: winter is unknown to him; and he leaves the green meadows of England in autumn for the myrtle and orange groves of Italy and for the palms of Africa."

The Chimney Swallow is so named from building in chimneys, and it prefers one where there is a constant fire, probably for the sake of warmth. "Not," remarks White, "that it can subsist in the immediate shaft, but prefers one adjoining to that of the kitchen, and disregards the perpetual smoke of that funnel, as I have often observed with some degree of wonder. Five, six, or more feet down the chimney does this little bird begin, about the middle of May, to form her nest, which consists, like that of the Martin, of a crust or

shell composed of dirt or mud, mixed with short pieces of straw to render it tough and permanent; with this difference, that, whereas the shell of the former is nearly hemispheric, that of the latter is open at the top and like half a deep dish: this nest is lined with fine grasses and feathers, which are often collected as they float in the air. Wonderful is the address which this adroit bird shows all day long in ascending and descending with security through so narrow a pass. When hovering over the mouth of the funnel, the vibrations of her wings, acting on the confined air, occasion a rumbling like thunder. It is not improbable that the dam submits to this inconvenient situation so low in the shaft, in order to secure her broods from rapacious birds, and particularly from Owls, which frequently fall down chimneys, perhaps in attempting to get at these nestlings."

The Chimney Swallow will occasionally

build within houses, and make choice of singular spots for its abode. Thus we are told by Bewick, on the authority of Sir John Trevelyan, that at Camerton Hall near Bath, a pair, entering a room by a broken window-pane, built their nest on the upper part of the frame of an old picture over the chimney. They came for three successive years, and would in all probability have continued the practice, had not the room been put into repair, which prevented their access to it.

The Martin, or Window Swallow, so named from building frequently close to windows, under the eaves of houses, is not less remarkable than the Chimney Swallow for selecting singular situations. M. Hebert saw a pair build on the spring of a bell, the bottom of the nest resting on the spring, while the upper semicircular brim leaned against the wall by its two ends, three or four inches below the eave. The two birds during the building

passed the nights on the iron spike to which the spring was fastened. The constant shaking given by the spring caused the hatch to fail; yet the pair would not forsake their tottering habitation, and continued to occupy it for the rest of the season. Another pair, mentioned by Bingley, built for two successive seasons on the handles of a pair of garden shears which had been stuck up against the boards in an outhouse. A still more singular instance is recorded of another pair, which built their nest on the wings and body of a dead Owl, hung up on the rafter of a barn, and so loose as to be moved by every gust of wind. This Owl, with the nest on its wings, and the eggs in the nest, was brought as a curiosity to the museum of Sir Ashton Lever, who, struck with the oddity of the thing, desired a large shell to be fixed up where the Owl had hung; and the following season a nest was built there, as had been anticipated, and transmitted to

the Leverian Museum as a companion to the Owl.

The Sand Martin frequents steep sandy banks near rivers, in the sides of which it makes deep holes; at the end of these it places its nest, carelessly constructed of straw, dry grass, and feathers. Swifts build in lofty steeples and towers, and sometimes under the arches of bridges; the nest is composed of dry grass, moss, hemp, gauze, muslin, feathers, and every sort of light substance which they find in the sweepings of towns. All the species of Swallows lay five or six eggs, and the Martin rears two and sometimes three broods in a season.

Though the nest of the Swallow may appear to deform the trim mansion, it is very seldom disturbed, and something of the ancient feeling in its favour still prevails. A writer in the Gentleman's Magazine says: "For my own part, I am not ashamed to own that I have tempted Window Swallows to build round

my house, by fixing scollop-shells in places convenient for their 'pendent beds and procreant cradles;' and have been much pleased in observing with what caution the little architect raises a buttress under each shell before he ventures to form his nest on it."

Swallows, indeed, while absolutely inoffensive to man, ought to be secure from his molestation, on account of the services which they render in clearing the atmosphere of innumerable insects, which, if not kept under by their means, would torment us like another Egyptian plague. The immense quantity of flies, says the Rev. Mr. Bree, destroyed in a short space of time by one individual bird is scarcely to be credited by those who have not had actual experience of the fact. Having shot a Swift in the breeding-season, after the young were hatched, when the parent birds are accustomed to make excursions to a considerable distance to collect flies for their in-

fant progeny, on picking up the victim, he observed a number of flies, some mutilated, others scarcely injured, crawling out of its mouth. The throat and pouch seemed absolutely stuffed with them, and an incredible number was at length disgorged. He assures us that there was a mass of flies just caught by this single Swift, larger than, when pressed close, could conveniently be contained in the bowl of an ordinary table-spoon.

Swallows, when caught, soon become familiar with man. Bewick relates that the bird from which his woodcut was taken, had been slightly wounded in the wing, so as to prevent its flying away. It sat to him for its portrait, while he was engaged in engraving it; and having, during that time, been fed by the hand with flies, it watched every motion, and whenever the eye was pointedly directed towards it, would run close up to the graver, in expectation of a fresh supply.

The same writer gives a very interesting account of a young bird of this species, which was reared by the children of the Rev. Mr. Trevelyan, to whom he soon became much attached. He opened his mouth for flies as fast as he could be supplied, and was fed to a whistle. In a few days, they used to take him into the fields with them, and as each child found a fly and whistled, the bird flew for its prey from one to another. At other times he would fly round them in the air, but always descended at the first call, in spite of the constant endeavours of the wild Swallows to seduce him away; for which purpose several would fly round him at once and strive to drive him away, when they saw him about to settle on any of the children's hands extended with food.

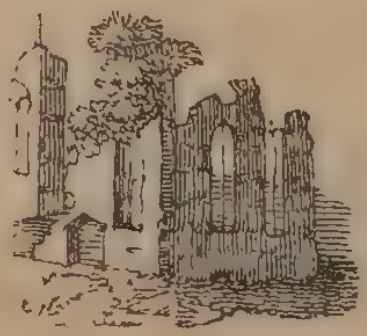
Scarcely any subject in natural history has more engaged the attention of naturalists in all ages than the winter retreat of the Swallow,

neither is there any concerning which more contrary opinions have been entertained. Some writers have supposed that they never leave us at all, but lie in a torpid state, during the winter and spring, in the banks of rivers, in the hollows of decayed trees, in holes and crevices of old buildings, in sand-banks, and such like places. Some have even gone so far as to assert that Swallows pass the winter immersed in lakes and rivers, where they have been found in clusters. While we consider such statements as unworthy of refutation, it cannot be denied that individual Swallows have sometimes been found during the winter months in a torpid state; but such instances are by no means common, and will not support the inference that the whole species are preserved in the same manner. They seem rather to prove that such young birds as were late hatched, and are consequently not strong enough to undertake the long journey performed by

the great body of the community, are left behind, and remain concealed in hiding-places till spring. That actual migrations of the Swallow tribe do take place, has been fully proved by a variety of well-attested facts, and by the observations of navigators, who have been eye-witnesses of their flights, and whose ships have afforded a resting-place to the weary travellers.

About the end of September the flocks of Swallows and Martins which congregate on house-tops, but principally on the towers of churches on our coast, are very amusing. The east coast, from Harwich to Winterton-Ness in Norfolk, is much resorted to by these birds. At Dunwich, in Suffolk, in particular, great multitudes of Swallows are observed to land in the spring, and to take their departure for other climes in the autumn. "I was at Dunwich," says a tourist, "about the beginning of October, and, lodging in a house that looked

into the church-yard, I observed in the evening an unusual multitude of Swallows, sitting on the leads of the church, and covering the tops of several houses round about. This led me to inquire what was the meaning of such a prodigious number of Swallows sitting there. I was answered, that this was the season when the Swallows, their food failing here, begin to leave us, and return to the country, wherever it be, whence they came; and that, this being the nearest land to the opposite coast, they were waiting for a gale, and might be said to be wind-bound. This was more evident to me, when I found that, in the morning, the wind had come about to the north-west in the night, and that not one Swallow was to be seen."



BLACKCAP.

This member of the family of the Warblers is about six inches in length, and is named from the black colour of the top of the head. The back and wings are olive grey, and the under parts of the body white. Hence, as Slaney humorously remarks, this little bird may be known from all others by his quaker-grey dress, and his quaker-like habit of always wearing his hat on. It visits us about the middle of April and retires in September. It frequents woods, thick hedges, and also orchards and gardens, where it delights us with its song, which is so melodious, and so like that of the Nightingale, except in variety of notes, as to obtain for it in some parts of the country the name of the Mock-nightingale. White observes, that it has usually a full, sweet, deep, and loud pipe ; yet the strain is of short continuance and

the motions desultory; but when the bird sits calmly and in earnest engages in song, it pours forth very sweet but inward melody, and expresses a great variety of gentle modulations, superior perhaps to any of our Warblers, the Nightingale excepted. Sweet says, that it is a real mock-bird, and will catch the note of any bird that it hears sing. He tell us, that he has heard it imitate the Nightingale so exactly as to deceive him; also the Blackbird, the Thrush, and the greater Pettychaps, all which it imitates so much in its voice that it is almost impossible to detect it; except when it runs from one into another, or shows itself on the open part of a tree.

The Black-cap builds its nest in some low bush or shrub, very commonly among the branches of the woodbine. The exterior is very slightly composed of the dry stalks and fibrous roots of grass, thinly interwoven with hairs, and bound to the twigs with the cotton

of plants: but the inside is deep and round. The eggs, commonly five in number, are reddish brown, sprinkled or marbled with spots of a deeper colour.

The Black-cap, though a migratory bird, is known to build for many successive years in the same spot. The male assists his mate in the duty of hatching, sitting upon the eggs nearly as much as the female. Sweet relates that he has frequently heard and seen the male bird sing while thus engaged, and has more than once found the nest by it.

On the first arrival of this bird it feeds greedily on ivy-berries, but forsakes that food for insects, when the warm weather renders them more plentiful. It is also fond of raspberries and red currants.

WHEATEAR.

This bird, sometimes called, from the delicacy of its flesh, the English Ortolan, is about six inches in length. The general colour of its plumage is bluish grey above, and pale buff on the under parts, tinged on the breast with red. It has a black patch on either side over the eyes, cheek, and ear; the upper part of the tail is white; the rest, with the wings, black.

The Wheatear arrives in this country in March, and leaves us again in September. It chiefly frequents heaths, warrens, and the edges of hills, feeds on insects, particularly earth-worms, grows prodigiously fat towards autumn, and nestles in rabbit-burrows, or under a clod or stone. The eggs, from five to eight in number, are of a light blue, with

WHEATEAR.

RED START.

GREAT PLOVER.

CORN-CRAKE.

a deep blue circle at the large end. The young are hatched about the middle of May.

Wheatears are very abundant in some parts of England. About Eastbourne, in Sussex, they are taken in snares made of horse-hair, placed beneath a long turf. The birds being very timid, the motion of a cloud or the appearance of a Hawk will drive them for shelter into these traps. The numbers usually caught in a season in the neighbourhood of Eastbourne are said to amount to nearly two thousand dozen, and they are usually sold at six-pence a dozen. The smaller are eaten in the country, and the larger selected for the London market: when potted by the poulterers, they are as much esteemed by many as the Ortolan is on the Continent.

The Wheatear is nevertheless not a gregarious but a solitary bird. Though caught in such multitudes on the South Downs, "yet," says White, "I never saw (and I am well

acquainted with those parts) above two or three at a time. Pennant mentions, as one cause for these birds being so numerous at Eastbourne, that the neighbourhood abounds with a certain fly, which frequents the adjacent hills for the sake of the wild thyme; adding, that the fly deposits its eggs, and also feeds, upon the thyme.

The Wheatear is a singing bird. "A pair that I possess at present," says Sweet, "were caught in September last, began to sing in a few days, and have continued in song ever since; and now, while writing this, the 22nd day of December, they are in full song."

REDSTART.

This bird cannot fail to attract the attention of an observer by the beauty of its plumage. It measures rather more than five

inches in length. The throat, fore part, and sides of the neck are black; the upper part of the body is a deep blue grey, changing towards the tail to a glowing red inclining to orange; the breast and sides are of the same colour, which extends also to the tail, excepting the two middle feathers, and these are brown.

The Redstart appears in England about the middle of April, and leaves us at the end of September or in the beginning of October. During its residence with us, says Selby, it will generally be found in the vicinity of old walls, in the crevices of which, as well as in the holes of decayed trees, it prepares its nest. Yet, though wild and timorous, it is frequently found in towns, choosing the least accessible places for its retreat. It is an active and restless bird, and when perched shakes its tail with a rapid and singularly tremulous horizontal motion. It feeds on flies, spiders, ants' eggs,

small berries, and soft fruits. From its song, which, though short, consists of sweet and pleasing notes, its elegant shape, and its varied plumage, it may be considered one of the most interesting of our summer visitants. When it first arrives, it will mount to the tops of the loftiest trees, where it will sit and sing for hours, beginning at day-break. Its nest is formed of moss, with a lining of hair and feathers, and contains from five to eight eggs of a fine greenish blue. The young, thickly freckled with tawny spots, might easily be mistaken for those of the Redbreast, but for the peculiar horizontal motion of the tail, which begins as soon as they fly.

In confinement, the Redstart, we are told by Sweet, may be taught to sing any tune that is whistled or sung to it: one that he kept for some years learned the Copenhagen waltz, which it had frequently heard sung, only it would sometimes stop in the middle, and say

chipput, a name by which it was generally called, and which it would repeat every time he entered the room where it was, either by night or by day.

A foreign naturalist asserts that the Redstart embellishes its natural song, consisting of several rather pretty strophes, by adding the notes of other birds with which it associates. One, which had built under the eaves of his house, imitated pretty closely a caged Chaffinch in a window underneath; and his neighbour had another in his garden, which repeated some of the notes of a Blackcap that had a nest hard by. The facility of appropriating the song of other birds is rare in a wild state, and appears to be almost confined to this species.

GREAT PLOVER.

The species of the Plover family have generally been classed among the water birds; but Bewick considers most of them as partaking almost exclusively of the nature of land birds. Many, he says, breed upon our loftiest mountains, and though they are sometimes seen feeding upon the sea-shores, yet they are no more water birds on that account, than many of our small birds which repair thither for that purpose.

The Great Plover is about sixteen inches in length. The prevailing colour of the upper parts of the body is a pale tawny brown, each feather having a dark streak down the middle; while the under parts are a yellowish white. The bill and legs are long and the tail short and rounded.

This bird arrives here in April, and, though

plentiful in the southern counties, it is not met with in the northern parts of our island. It prefers dry and stony places on the sides of sloping banks. It is rarely seen during the day, unless surprised, when it springs to some distance and generally escapes before the sportsman can come within gun-shot. It will run along the ground almost as swiftly as a dog, after a while stop short, and, on the least noise, squat close to the ground. In the evening it comes forth in quest of food, consisting chiefly of worms; and its singular cry, resembling a harsh whistle, three or four times repeated, and which has been likened to the turning of a rusty handle, may then be heard at a great distance.

The Plover makes no nest, the female laying two or three eggs on the bare ground, under shelter of a stone or in a hollow formed in the sand. They are of a dirty white, marked with spots and slight streaks of a deep reddish

colour. White says that the young run from the nest, almost as soon as they are out of the shell, like Partridges; and that the dam leads them to some stony field, where they bask, skulking among the stones, which they resemble so nearly in colour as not to be easily discovered.

At the beginning of autumn these birds assemble in flocks preparatory to their departure. It is believed that they retire to Spain, and frequent the sheep-walks with which that country abounds.

When young, the Great Plover is accounted good eating; but the flesh of the old birds is hard, black, and dry.

CORNCRAKE.

The Corncrake, called also the Landrail, and formerly classed among the land birds, has been placed by some later naturalists among the genus Gallinule, or Water Hen; which, indeed, it very closely resembles in structure and appearance. It is rather more than nine inches long. The plumage of the upper parts of the body is dark brown, each feather edged with pale rust colour; of the under parts yellowish white, marked with faint rust-coloured bars; the fore part of the neck and breast pale ash; wings deep chestnut. The legs and feet are long, the tail very short.

In its habits the Corncrake differs little from the Great Plover. It arrives in the spring, and, from its coming about the same time, and frequenting the same places as the Quail, it is called in some countries the King

of the Quails. Its singular cry is heard as soon as the grass is long enough to afford shelter, and continues till it is cut; but the bird is rarely seen. Skulking in the thickest part of the grass, it runs through it so nimbly, doubling and winding in every direction, that it is difficult to get near it. Sometimes, when hard pressed by the dog, it stops short and squats down, when its too eager pursuer overshoots the spot and loses the scent. It rarely flies, unless when driven to extremity, and then to no great distance: the moment it alights, it runs off again, and, before the fowler can reach the spot, the bird is at a considerable distance.

The Corncrake feeds principally on slugs, and also on shell-snails, worms, and various kinds of insects, as well as on seeds. On its first arrival in this country, it is so lean as to weigh scarcely six ounces, but before its departure in autumn it has been found to exceed

WILLOW-WREN.

REDWING.

FIELDFARE.

HOODED CROW.

NIGHT-JAR.

eight ounces, when it is reckoned a great delicacy. Its nest is composed of dry grass or moss loosely put together: the female lays ten or twelve eggs, of a pale ash colour with reddish spots. The young are covered with a black down, and follow the mother as soon as they have issued from the shell.

NIGHT-JAR.

This bird was formerly called the Goat-sucker, a name founded on the erroneous notion that it sucked the she-goat. It is about the size of the Cuckoo; its plumage is beautifully diversified with browns of various hues, mixed with rust colour and white in such a manner as to defy description. The male is distinguished by an oval white spot on the wing and another on the tail. The legs are short; the toes connected by a membrane as

far as the first joint; the middle one is considerably larger than the rest, and the claw serrated (that is, resembling the teeth of a saw) on one side.

The Night-jar arrives in this country about the end of May, being one of our latest birds of passage, and leaves us at the end of August or in the beginning of September. Its eyes, like those of the Owl, are so constructed as to be dazzled by the bright rays of the sun; hence it is seldom seen in the day-time, unless disturbed, or in dark gloomy weather. It feeds on insects, which it catches on the wing; and is a great destroyer of the large-bodied moths, and of the cockchafer or dor-beetle, from which circumstance it is called in some places the Dor-Hawk. White supposed that it uses its feet in taking its prey; as he observed it, while on the wing, frequently put forth a leg, with which it seemed to convey something to its mouth. It generally sits on

the ground, on spots where from the resemblance of their colour to that of its plumage it is not easily perceived; but, if disturbed, it perches on a bough, not across like other birds, but lengthwise; its hinder toe being capable of turning forward as well as backward. In this position, with its head lower than its tail, it utters the peculiar jarring note from which it has been named. It issues at twilight from its retreats in pursuit of its insect prey; and, while on the wing, it makes a buzzing sound like that of a spinning-wheel turning round rapidly. Sometimes also it utters a slight squeak four or five times in succession. It is a solitary bird, and is rarely seen in company with even an individual of its own species.

This bird does not take the trouble of constructing a nest, but lays its two eggs upon the bare ground, among furze, fern, heath, or long grass, sometimes at the foot of trees or in holes in their trunks, but always near woods,

where chiefly it conceals itself by day. The eggs, somewhat larger than the Blackbird's, are whitish, elegantly marbled with light brown and ash colour.

WILLOW WREN.

This elegant little bird, about five inches in length, is olive green on the upper parts of the body, and whitish on the under parts, pretty deeply tinged with yellow on the throat, breast, and thighs; the wings are brown, with dull yellow edges. It arrives in small flocks in the south of England early in April, and leaves us again about the end of September.

The note of the Willow Wren is not unlike that of the Robin, but not so loud. These birds frequent hedges and shrubberies, their food consisting chiefly of the different kinds of aphis, in search of which they are continu-

ally running up and down the branches of trees. They build their nests in a low bush close to the ground, or in the hollow of a ditch, constructing them of dried grass and moss, warmly lined with soft feathers. They are of an oval form, having an entrance in front, immediately under the arched dome, which is considerably wider than that of the common Wren, though the bird itself is no thicker but only a little longer in the body. Externally the nest looks like a little clot of hay, whence the little architect is in some places called the Hay-bird. It lays six or seven white eggs, beautifully spotted with red.

WINTER VISITERS.

The birds of passage which visit us in winter are all hard-billed and consequently fitted to subsist on the seeds, berries, and wild fruits, which abound in our hedges during that season. They all come from colder climates, where in summer they have built their nests and reared their young, when frosts and deep snows deprive them of the requisite supply of food; and they leave us again in spring for their former haunts. Bewick reckons up nine birds of this kind, among which he includes the Wild Goose. They mostly arrive in large flocks, seemingly banding themselves together by their numbers against the severity of the season.

FIELDFARE.

The Fieldfare, a large handsome species of the Thrush family, is about ten inches in length. The plumage of the upper parts of the body is of a light bluish ash, spotted on the top of the head with black; the throat and breast yellow, regularly spotted with black; and the under parts yellowish white.

This bird arrives in Britain in large flocks about Michaelmas and leaves us in March. In very severe weather they migrate still further southward, if not prevented by a sudden fall of snow. In 1798, when a very heavy snow fell in the northern and eastern parts of England, prodigious flocks of Fieldfares appeared in the west; but, as that part of the country also was soon covered with snow, which lay for a considerable time, they became

too weak to proceed farther south, and thousands were picked up starved to death.

The Fieldfare feeds on the berries of the holly, thorn, juniper, and other shrubs, as well as on worms and insects. It is sometimes seen singly; but these birds in general form numerous flocks; and though they sometimes spread themselves over the fields in search of food, they seldom lose sight of each other, but when alarmed fly off and collect together on the same tree. If a person approaches, they remain quietly, till one of their number, at the extremity of a branch, rising on its wings, utters a loud and peculiar note of alarm: all immediately take to flight, excepting one, which stays till the intruder has approached still nearer, when it also flies off, repeating the cry of alarm. Though this bird perches on trees in the day-time, it always roosts on the ground.

REDWING.

The Redwing, also a species of Thrush, is somewhat smaller than the Fieldfare, and nearly resembles it in appearance, excepting that the sides of the body and the feathers under its wings are tinged with red, which is its peculiar characteristic, and hence it derives its name.

The Redwing arrives and leaves us about the same time as the Fieldfare; it frequents the same places, subsists on the same food, and is very similar in manners to that bird, with which it habitually associates. It breeds in the northernmost countries of Europe, where, perched on the tops of the highest trees, it enlivens their forests with its song, which is unknown to us, but is said to be extremely pleasing. It has, however, a singular note, a sort of inward deep-drawn sigh, on account

of which the provincial name of Swine-pipe has been given to it.

Like the Thrush, the Redwing and the Fieldfare are delicate eating. The Romans kept thousands of them together in aviaries, and fed them with a sort of paste, made of bruised figs and flour, to improve the delicacy and flavour of their flesh. The aviaries were so contrived as to admit but little light; and every object which might tend to remind them of their former liberty was carefully kept out of sight, such as the fields, the woods, the birds, or whatever might disturb the quiet necessary for their improvement. Under this management the birds fattened to the great profit of the owners, who sold them to the Roman epicures for three denarii, about two shillings of our money, apiece.

HOODED CROW.

The Hooded, or Royston Crow, is somewhat larger than the Rook, measuring nearly two feet in length. The head, throat, wings, and tail, are black; the rest of the plumage is ash-coloured. It visits the south of England in October and retires northward to breed in the beginning of April; but it resides throughout the year in the Hebrides, and some parts of Scotland and Ireland. With us these birds are seen mixing with the Rooks and feeding in the same manner; but they will also prey on carrion, and pick out the eyes not only of lambs and diseased sheep, but also of horses when stuck fast in bogs. Often, too, they resort to the sea-coast, where the various kinds of animal matter thrown up by the tide afford a constant supply of food.

The Hooded Crow lays five or six eggs:

only two or three in general produce young ones, to which the parent birds are said to be strongly attached.

WOODCOCK.

The Woodcock belongs to the numerous family of the Curlews, only two or three of which are British birds. It measures about fourteen inches in length, and weighs from twelve to fifteen ounces. The bill is about three inches long, and the shape of the head is remarkable, being rather obtusely triangular than round, with the eyes placed near the top and the ears very forward, nearly on a line with the corners of the mouth. The under parts of the plumage are yellowish white, barred with numerous dark waved lines; and the upper parts are so marbled, spotted, streaked, barred, and variegated, that it would

be difficult to describe them with accuracy. The colours, black, white, grey, red, brown, and yellow, are so crossed and broken, and appear at a little distance so blended together and confused, as to make the bird look exactly like the withered stalks and leaves of fern, and the sticks, moss, and grasses, which form the background of the scenery that shelters it in its moist and solitary retreats.

The Woodcock leaves the countries bordering the Baltic in the autumn and commencement of winter on its route to this country, where it keeps dropping in singly, or in pairs, from the beginning of October till December. Bewick says that these birds are never seen to arrive, and thence concludes that they must have the instinctive precaution to land only in the night, or in dark misty weather; as they are frequently discovered in the morning sheltered in ditches. After resting for a day near the sea-shore to recruit themselves, they

proceed inland to the very same haunts which they occupied the preceding season. In temperate weather they repair to the moors and bleak mountainous parts of the country; but as soon as frost sets in, they return to warmer and lower situations, to boggy grounds, and rills which are rarely frozen, seeking shelter in close bushes of holly, furze, and brakes, in woody glens, or dells covered with underwood. Here they remain concealed during the day, feeding only at night. Their usual food consists of insects and worms, for which they bore with their bills in moist places.

The flesh of this bird is held in high estimation, and in consequence it is eagerly sought after by the sportsman. When pursued by him, its flight is very rapid but short, as it drops suddenly behind the first sheltering coppice that presents itself, and runs swiftly away in search of some safer hiding-place. It is easily caught in nets, traps, and springes, which

are placed in its accustomed paths; for, while in quest of food, it will not fly or leap over any obstacle that is placed in its way.

The Woodcock occasionally breeds in this country. The nest, generally placed at the root or stump of a decayed tree, is carelessly made of dry leaves and fibrous roots, upon which the female lays four or five eggs, larger than a Pigeon's, of a rusty grey, marked with dusky spots. The young leave the nest as soon as they are out of the shell; but the parents continue to supply their wants till they can provide for themselves.

About the middle of March these birds begin to prepare for their departure from this country, drawing in flocks towards the coast, and availing themselves of the first fair wind to return to their summer homes. Should it happen to be contrary, they linger till it changes; and from their increased numbers they fall an easier prey to the sportsman.

SNIPE.

The Snipe belongs to the same family as the Woodcock. It is about twelve inches in length, and weighs four ounces. The body is variegated with blackish and tawny, and white beneath. The wings are so long as to cover the greater part of the tail; and the bill is nearly three inches in length.

The Snipe closely resembles the Woodcock in its habits, shunning the extremes of heat and cold by keeping upon the bleak moors in fine open weather, and seeking the shelter of low valleys in the severe season. It frequents bogs and wet grounds, where it is constantly digging with its long bill in search of food, which consists chiefly of a very small transparent red worm; it feeds also on grubs, slugs, and such insects as breed in stagnant waters and marshy places. When undisturbed in

these retreats, the Snipe walks leisurely with its head erect, and now and then moving its tail. But it is rarely permitted long to enjoy this tranquillity; being extremely watchful, it perceives the sportsman and his dog at a great distance, and either conceals itself among the variegated withered herbage, so similar in appearance to its own plumage, that it cannot be discovered, or more frequently springs and takes flight beyond the reach of the gun. When first disturbed, it utters a kind of faint whistle, and generally flies against the wind, turning nimbly in a zigzag direction for two or three hundred paces, and sometimes soaring almost out of sight. From its vigilance and manner of flying, the Snipe is very difficult to shoot. It is much esteemed as a delicious dish, and, though very fat, rarely disagrees even with the weakest stomach.

Though the Snipes in general leave Great Britain in spring and return in autumn, yet

it is certain that some of them breed in this country. The nest, composed of withered grasses and a few feathers, is generally placed under the stump of an alder or willow; the eggs, four or five in number, are greenish, with rusty spots. The observation made respecting the young of the Woodcock applies equally to those of the Snipe.

The cry of the Snipe has sometimes been confounded with that of the Bittern, though there is little resemblance between the two sounds. On the other hand, it is so like the bleating of the goat, that some foreign naturalists have named it the Celestial Goat, and in North Britain it is well-known by the name of Heatherbleat. It possesses, however, the faculty of varying its calls. A recent observer tells us, that one note may be compared to the words "tinker, tinker," uttered in a sharp shrill tone, as the bird ascends in his flight; the other, uttered as he descends, is somewhat

similar to the bleating of a lamb, only in a deeper tone, and accompanied with a violent vibration of the wings.

CROSSBILL.

The Crossbill belongs to the family of the Grosbeak, whose general appearance is very similar to that of birds of the Finch kind; and whose most conspicuous character is the thickness and strength of their bills, by which they are enabled to break fruit-stones and other hard substances in quest of food. The Crossbill has this further peculiarity, that the upper and under mandibles curve in opposite directions, and cross each other near the points.

This bird is about the size of a Lark; its general colour is reddish, mixed with brown on the upper parts, the under parts being

considerably paler, in some places almost white; the wings, which are short, and the tail, are brown. Individuals of this species vary much in the colours of their plumage, scarcely two being exactly similar.

The Crossbill breeds in the colder northern regions of Europe, whence it migrates in large flocks. Its visits to this country are irregular; in some years it is rarely seen, and in others it is met with in great numbers, but it is not known to breed with us. From June to the latter end of the year it is found more or less in fir plantations, feeding on the seed by dexterously dividing with its bill the scales of the cones, which it holds in one claw like the Parrot. In the same manner it will divide apples to get at the pippins.

In autumn these birds are so intent on picking out the seeds of fir-cones and apples, that it is not difficult to take them by means of a horse-hair noose, fastened to the end of a

long fishing-rod, which is put over their heads, or with a bird-call and birdlime. When kept in a cage, the Crossbill has all the actions of the Parrot, climbing by its hooked bill from the lower to the upper bars: from this resemblance, and from the beauty of its colours, it has been called by some the German Parrot.

WATER BIRDS.

Let us now turn to the last of the classes into which we have divided the feathered tribes, those which give animation to our sea-coasts, our marshes and inland waters. These naturally fall into two grand divisions, the Swimmers and the Waders. The former, which dwell much in the water, have short legs and feet, placed farther back than in other birds. Their toes are connected by membranes or webs, so that their feet form, as it were, broad oars, by means of which they move about on the water. They feed on fish, aquatic animals, and plants. To these belong the different species of the Swan, Goose, Duck, Grebe, Cormorant, Puffin, and Gull. The Waders, which frequent the sea-beach, the margins of lakes and rivers, marshes and stagnant pools, have mostly long bills formed to

perforate the soft mud and moist earth; and long legs, bare above the knees, so that they can wade through shallow waters in search of food without wetting their plumage. Others have shorter legs and bills of varied length, adapted to pick up only such insects, grasses, and seeds and roots of aquatic plants, as are to be met with near the surface of the ground, or in shallow pools; while others again plunge into the water in pursuit of their prey, whether fish or insects. All the Waders have divided toes, or at least but slightly connected, and are apparently fitted to live on land, as well as among water. Some of these reside with us all the year; a few, after breeding, migrate northward, as it is supposed; while by much the greater number invariably leave the north and remove southward on the approach of winter. To the Waders belong all the species of Herons, Bitterns, Curlews, Snipes, Sandpipers, Plovers, Rails, and Avocets.

SWAN.

The Swan is the largest of British birds, and the most majestic of those which swim upon the waters. When proudly sailing upon a river or lake, displaying its graceful attitudes, and moving forward without the smallest apparent effort, a more beautiful figure, clad as it is in plumage of snowy whiteness, can scarcely be found in animated nature. There are two species of this elegant bird, the wild and the tame, in which there is very little external difference except in size; the former being about five feet in length, and weighing about fifteen pounds, while the latter attains the weight of twenty-five. The most remarkable distinction consists in the conformation of the windpipe, which, in the tame species, enters the lungs at once, so that the utmost noise the bird can utter is a mere hiss:

CURLEW.

LAPWING.

DUCK.

GOOSE.

SWAN.

whereas, in the wild species, the windpipe first enters the chest a little way, is then reflected in the form of a trumpet, after which it enters a second time, and, then dividing into two branches, proceeds to join the lungs. This species has a shrill, harsh, piercing voice, not unlike the sound of a clarionet when blown by a novice in music; notwithstanding the fabulous accounts of the ancients, and the high-strained similes of their poets, relative to the melody of the Swan, and especially to its dying song. It is asserted, however, by those who have heard the united and varied voices of a numerous assemblage of Swans, that they produce a more harmonious effect, particularly when softened by the murmur of the waters.

The Wild Swan can scarcely be considered as a British bird, seldom appearing in England excepting in hard winters, though a few occasionally breed in some of the remote solitary Scottish islands. The tame Swan is so well

known that a minute description would be unnecessary. The manners and habits of both species are very similar. Conscious of his superior strength, the Swan fears no enemy, neither does he suffer any bird, however powerful, to molest him; at the same time he preys upon none of the feathered tribe. His vigorous wing defends him from the attacks even of the Eagle, and the strokes which he can inflict with it are so powerful as to stun or kill the fiercest of his foes. His food consists of the grasses and weeds, and the seeds and roots of plants, which grow on the margin of the water, and of the numberless insects that skim over, or float on, its surface, occasionally too of the slimy inhabitants within its bosom.

The tame Swan is kept chiefly as an elegant appendage to the demesnes of the wealthy. In this state he can scarcely be accounted a captive, for he enjoys all the pleasures of liberty. Swans are seen without an owner on

the river Trent, on the inlet of the sea near Abbotsbury, in Dorsetshire, and on some other rivers and lakes in the British Isles. Those on the Thames have for ages been protected as royal property, and it is still accounted felony to steal their eggs. Hence they are a very frequent ornament of the upper part of that noble river. In former times, great numbers of them were reared for the table; but now they are regarded as coarse eating. A young Swan fattened, is, however, still considered as a great delicacy.

The female makes her nest among the rough herbage in some retired part of the bank, or in some islet in a river, and lays seven or eight white eggs, considerably longer than those of the Goose. She sits two months, or, according to some, six weeks only. Both male and female are very attentive to their young, and will not suffer any enemy to approach them. Latham relates that a female Swan at Pensip,

in Buckinghamshire, while sitting, observed a fox swimming towards her from the opposite shore. She instantly darted into the water, and, having kept him at bay for some time with her wings, at last succeeded in drowning him; after which, in sight of several persons, she returned in triumph. While employed with the cares of the young brood, it is not safe even for a man to approach these birds; for they will fly upon a stranger and often beat him to the ground,—nay, they have been known by a stroke of the wing to break a man's leg.

Notwithstanding the majestic and elegant appearance of the Swan on the water, it makes but an indifferent figure upon land: its gait, like that of the Goose, is heavy and waddling, and its attitudes and motions in walking are as awkward as they are graceful in swimming.

It is generally believed that the Swan attains a great age, though the term of three

centuries assigned to it by some authors is certainly much exaggerated; the common notion is that it lives to one hundred years.

GOOSE.

Our tame Goose is so well-known that it may appear needless to describe it. The predominant colours of this useful domestic fowl are white and grey, with shades of ash-blue and brown: some are yellowish, others dusky, and many differ very little in appearance from the Wild Goose,—the original stock from which they were all derived.

The Wild Goose generally measures two feet nine inches in length, and weighs about ten pounds. The upper part of the plumage is of a deep brown mixed with ash grey; the breast and under parts are crossed and clouded with dusky and ash on a whitish ground,

except towards the tail, where the feathers are snow-white.

The Wild Goose is common in this country; for though the lakes, swamps, and morasses of the northernmost regions of the globe are the summer residences and breeding-places of this species, yet it is known that many of them remain and breed in the fen countries of England. Large flocks of them are seen regularly migrating southward in autumn and northward in spring, when their bold flight appears to be governed by geometrical instinct, and has a very picturesque effect. In a body shaped like a wedge they cut the air with less individual exertion; and it is conjectured that the change of its form from an inverted V to an L, or a straight line, is occasioned by the leader of the van quitting his post at the point of the angle through fatigue, dropping into the rear, and leaving his place to be occupied by another. This leader is generally an old

Gander, "who," says Slaney, "every now and then pipes his well-known *honk*, as if to ask how they come on; and the *honk* of 'All's well' is generally returned by some of the party."

Wild Geese are very destructive to the growing corn in the fields where they happen to alight during their migrations. They are so wary that it is difficult to take them, feeding only in the day-time and resorting to the water at night. Nothing can exceed the vigilant circumspection and acute hearing of their sentinel, who, stationed on some eminence, watches everything that moves all around, and the moment he gives the alarm the whole flock take wing.

The tame Goose, which attains by means of feeding the weight of from nine to fifteen pounds, is valuable not only as a delicate article of food, but also for the feathers, down, and quills, which furnish us with the

pens that we employ in writing, and materials for the beds on which we so comfortably repose at night. These advantages are not obtained without the practice of great cruelty upon the poor birds, which are plucked five times a year; at Lady-day for the feathers and quills, and four times more between that and Michaelmas for the feathers only. Pennant saw the tail-feathers plucked even from Goslings only six weeks old; and he tells us that numbers of Geese perish when the season afterwards proves cold.

Geese are kept alike by the rich and the poor, feeding chiefly on water insects, worms, and grass, which they crop by means of two rows of strong sharp teeth within their bills. They are seen, therefore, in every situation which affords them sufficient water; but in no part of England are they reared in such numbers as in the fens of Lincolnshire. There it is not uncommon for one person to possess a

thousand old geese, each of which will bring up, on an average, seven young ones annually. From that and the other eastern counties the London markets are chiefly supplied; and they are sometimes sent to the metropolis in droves of several thousands, travelling at the rate of eight or ten miles a day, from three in the morning till nine at night. "It is a most curious spectacle," says Bewick, "to view these hissing, cackling, gabbling, but peaceful armies, with grave deportment, waddling along (like other armies) to certain destruction. The drivers are each provided with a long stick, at one end of which a red rag is tied as a lash, and a hook is fixed at the other: with the former, of which the Geese appear to be much afraid, they are urged forward; and with the latter, such as attempt to stray are caught by the neck and kept in order,—or, if lame, they are put into an hospital cart, which usually follows each large drove."

Geese lay early in the spring from seven to twelve eggs, and nests are everywhere provided for them, consisting of a wicker framework covered with turf, and water and corn are placed near the nests. The eggs are hatched in about thirty days. Both the parent birds, the Gander (the male) in particular, are extremely attentive to their young, and courageous in defence of them. We have already noticed the vigilance of the Wild Geese: the tame birds of this species have for many ages been celebrated for that quality. The story of their saving Rome, by the alarm which they gave when the Gauls attempted to surprise the Capitol, is known to every schoolboy; and there are few readers to whom it is not equally well known, that nothing can stir in the night, neither can the slightest or most distant noise be made, without rousing the Geese, which immediately begin to hold their cackling converse; and that, on the nearer

approach of apprehended danger, they set up more shrill and clamorous cries. Hence they are esteemed by many as the most vigilant of sentinels.

It is generally believed that the Goose lives to a great age, and particular instances are recorded of birds of this species which have lived seventy and even eighty years; but they are very rarely permitted to arrive at the natural term of their life.

DUCK.

The common Duck, like the Goose, derives its origin from the wild bird of the same name, which is also called the Mallard. The Mallard is nearly two feet in length, and weighs about two pounds and a half. In the male, the head and upper half of the neck are of a glossy, deep, changeable green; a white col-

lar nearly encircles the middle of the neck, the lower part of which, as well as the breast and shoulders, is of a deep vinous chestnut: the back is brown, the belly pale grey, crossed with narrow waved dusky lines, and the extremity of the body black. The beauty-spot common in the Duck tribe, which crosses the closed wing in a transverse oblique direction, is of a rich glossy purple, with violet or green reflections, and bordered by a double streak of black and white. The four middle tail-feathers are black with purple reflections, and curl stiffly upwards like those of the domestic Drake. The plumage of the female is a plain brown, marked with black.

In their habits the Mallards very nearly resemble the Wild Geese. At the end of autumn they quit their northern residences in vast flocks, migrating southward, and spread themselves over the lakes and marshy wastes of the British Isles. In the spring they again

retire northward to breed; but many straggling pairs remain to rear their young, which become natives and stay with us throughout the year. The female makes her nest, generally in the most sequestered bogs and mosses, among reeds and rushes: she lays from ten to sixteen greenish white eggs. Wild Ducks have sometimes been known to lay in a high tree, in the deserted nest of a Magpie or a Crow; and an instance is recorded of one found at Etchingham, in Sussex, sitting on nine eggs in an oak, at the height of twenty-five feet from the ground, the eggs being placed upon small twigs laid crosswise. To her young, which are nearly three months before they can fly, the Wild Duck is an attentive parent, carrying or leading them from pool to pool, and in this country using the same stratagems as the Partridge to mislead the sportsman and his dog.

Wild Ducks abound in marshy places in

many parts of England, but are nowhere so plentiful as in the extensive fens of Lincolnshire, where they are caught by thousands at a time in decoys. Pennant makes mention of a season in which upwards of thirty thousand Ducks, Teal, and Wigeons were sold in London from only ten of these decoys near Wainfleet. Great numbers of wild fowl are also shot upon our shores.

Many of our common tame Ducks have nearly the same plumage as the wild ones; others differ much from them as well as from each other; but all the Drakes (or males) retain the distinctive mark of their wild original, the curled feathers of the tail. Habits of domestication, however, have deprived the tame Duck of that sprightly look and figure which characterize the Mallard, and substituted a duller and less elegant form and appearance in their stead. Ducks are reared with very little trouble or expense. The various animal

PUFFIN.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE.

CORMORANT.

SEA-MEW

AVOCET.

and vegetable substances on which they principally feed, and for which they are incessantly searching with their curiously-constructed bills, sifting and separating every alimentary particle from the mud, would be lost but for them. They greedily devour not only all sorts of grain, but also worms, slugs, snails, water insects, and sometimes frogs and small fishes, as well as the seeds of various bog and water plants. They lay a great number of eggs in the course of the year, produce many young, and are easily and expeditiously fattened for the table, to which they furnish a savoury and wholesome addition.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE.

The family of the Grebes dwell almost exclusively upon the water, where they display remarkable agility. At sea they sport with

the waves, darting through them with the greatest ease, swimming or rather sliding upon the surface with wonderful velocity and without any apparent effort, and diving to a great depth in pursuit of prey: they frequent also fresh-water lakes and inlets of rivers, when these are not frozen. On land, however, these birds are extremely helpless; for though they can take wing from the water, or, dropping from an eminence, can fly with great swiftness to a considerable distance, they can neither rise from the flat surface of the ground, nor make much progress in walking upon it. There they sit, with body erect, commonly upon the whole length of their short legs: in attempting to regain the water, they awkwardly waddle forward in the same posture; and if, owing to any interruption, they happen to fall on the belly, they sprawl with their feet, flap their short wings, and may easily be caught, as they are incapable of any defence

but by striking violently with their sharp-pointed beaks. They subsist upon fish, roots of fresh-water plants, and sea-weed.

The Great Crested Grebe, the largest of this genus, is twenty-one inches in length, and weighs about two pounds and a half. The plumage of the head forms a kind of ruff or tippet surrounding the upper part of the neck: the feathers on each side of the head behind, being longer than the rest, stand out like ears; this curious appendage is of a bright rust colour fringed with black. The upper parts of the body are of a mouse-coloured brown, and the under parts silvery white. Birds of this species are common in the fens and lakes in various parts of England, where they breed. The female makes her nest among flags and reeds growing in the water: it is constructed with the dry fibres, stalks, and leaves of various kinds of aquatic plants. She lays from two to four eggs. The young are fed on small eels.

The skins of these birds are frequently dressed with the feathers on, and the white parts of them are employed in making beautiful soft warm tippets and muffs for ladies. It is said that one of these skins sells as high as fourteen shillings, and that five skins are required to make a muff.

CORMORANT.

This bird belongs to the Pelican family, which includes upwards of thirty species. They have a long straight bill, either hooked or sloping at the end; the face generally bare of feathers, the gullet also naked and capable of great distension; the body long and heavy, and the legs placed far backward. They are gregarious, fond of fish, and in general remarkable for their extreme voracity.

The Cormorant is from two feet and a half

to three feet and a half in length, and weighs from four to seven pounds. The plumage of the back and the under parts is commonly of a glossy blue black, with green reflections, and the rest chiefly of a dull brown. The upper mandible of the bill is hooked over the lower, so as to hold firmly his slippery prey; while the loose naked skin under the chin forms a pouch capable of such distension as to enable the bird to swallow prey apparently much too large to be admitted into its throat.

Cormorants usually assemble in flocks on the summits or inaccessible parts of rocks overhanging the sea or surrounded by it. Here they build their nests of sticks, grasses, and sea-weed, cast on shore by the waves, laying three or four greenish white eggs, about the size of those of a goose. In winter they visit our inland waters, following the course of the larger rivers, sometimes taking a liking to a particular spot and building in trees. An in-

stance of this kind is related by Slaney. "In the Severn," he says, "a few miles above Shrewsbury, there is an island with some tall trees: about twenty years ago, the persons who lived near perceived that these trees were resorted to by two or three Cormorants; they remained about the spot for several months, till towards the breeding season. The Cormorants returned the following autumn, bringing with them three or four more, perhaps their progeny; and they gradually increased to the number of sixteen or eighteen, which might be seen about their favourite haunt, taking their airy excursions along the course of the river, and not unfrequently passing near the village and church; at which the ancient rustics shook their heads, and said that 'something would happen.' Foragers or stragglers from this colony visited the waters round in various directions. This dwelling of wild sea plunderers, sixty miles from the ocean, amidst

an inclosed and highly-cultivated country, continued many years, and a few are occasionally seen there."

These birds make great havoc among the fish both at sea and on the inland waters. Possessing very acute sight, they drop down from the greatest height upon their prey, dive after it with the rapidity of an arrow, and seize the victim with almost unerring certainty; then rising with the fish across the bill, they throw it up into the air with a kind of twirl, and, dexterously catching it head foremost, swallow it whole.

While at rest on shore, after having glutted themselves with food, they sit nearly in an erect posture, propped up by the stiff feathers of the tail, commonly on the ledge of a projecting rock, in a dozing and stupified state. At such times they may be easily taken by nets thrown over them, or by a noose put around their necks, which they avoid no further than

by moving the head from side to side as long as they can. They were formerly trained in this country, as they still are in China, to catch fish for the table. For this purpose they were kept with great care in the house, hoodwinked in the manner of Falcons; and, when taken out to fish, a leathern thong was tied round the lower part of their necks to prevent them from swallowing the fish.

The voice of the Cormorant is a harsh, disagreeable croak. From this circumstance, coupled with his voracious disposition, and the picture of Milton, who in his Paradise Lost represents Satan as assuming his form, the character of this bird has been unjustly decried. Montagu, however, gives a more favourable representation of its qualities, in an amusing account of one which was taken in a wild state and soon became domesticated. "It is," says that accurate observer, "extremely docile, of a grateful disposition, without the smallest

tincture of a savage and vindictive spirit, and by no means possessing the bad qualities which a celebrated writer would induce us to believe by making it personify Satan. In less than a week after its capture, it was perfectly familiarised, and made one in the family circle round the fire, suffering the caresses of the children. Being removed to an aquatic menagerie, it lived in perfect harmony with a whistling Swan, a Barnacle Goose, various sorts of Ducks, and other birds. If it gets out, it never attempts to ramble, but, walking direct to the house, enters the first open door, without deference to any one, regardless even of a dog, and in fact is troublesomely tame."

PUFFIN.

The Puffin, which belongs to the Auk family, is about twelve inches in length, and weighs as many ounces. The crown of the head, back of the neck, and upper part of the plumage, are black; a collar of the same colour encircles the neck; the under parts are white. It is remarkable for the form of its bill, which exactly resembles two very short knife-blades, applied one against the other by the edge so as to form a sort of triangle, but longer than it is broad, and crossed towards the point by three or four little furrows. From the position of the feet, which are placed so far back that it stands almost upright, it has more the appearance of a small kangaroo than of a bird. All the true diving birds possess this characteristic.

Like many other birds of the same family

the Puffin, though it rises upon the wing with difficulty, can fly with great rapidity. It walks with a wriggling, awkward gait, upon the whole length of the leg and foot. In stormy weather, it takes shelter in caverns and holes in the rocks, where it sits dozing in security till the return of calm weather: for these birds, though almost dwelling upon the sea, cannot weather the tempest; and, when overtaken by it, they are frequently found drowned and cast on shore. They are known to subsist on crabs, shrimps, sprats, and other small fish, and also on sea-weed; but from the strength and sharpness of their bill, it is evident that they are furnished with powers for securing larger prey.

These birds are found on almost all the rocky cliffs on the coasts of Great Britain and Ireland, and in immense multitudes on some of the surrounding islets. They are particularly abundant at Priestholm, or Puffin's

Island, about three-quarters of a mile from the Isle of Anglesey; where Bingley assures us that he has seen fifty acres of land literally covered with these birds, whose numbers he calculated at upwards of fifty thousand. They arrive early in April, again leave once or twice and return, before they begin to burrow for their nests. This task falls chiefly to the share of the male, which begins by scraping a hole in the sand not far from the shore. When he has got to some depth, he throws himself on his back, and, with his strong bill as a digger, and his broad feet to remove the mould, he forms a burrow with several turnings and windings from eight to ten feet deep. Wherever he can find a stone, he prefers digging under it, that his retreat may be the more securely fortified. The Puffin, however, is himself so formidably armed, from the peculiar shape and great strength of his bill, that few birds or beasts will venture to attack him.

It is said, however, that the Raven is sometimes bold enough to offer battle; but as soon as he approaches, the Puffin seizes him under the throat with its bill, and sticks its claws into his breast, till he screams with pain and tries to escape. The Puffin keeps fast hold of the aggressor, and tumbles him about, till both frequently fall into the sea, where the Raven is drowned, and the Puffin returns to its nest in triumph. Should the Raven happen at the first onset to get hold of the Puffin's neck, he generally comes off victorious, kills the bird, and feasts on the eggs or the young.

The Puffin lays but one egg, which the male assists in hatching. The young are entirely covered with a long blackish down, and are so different in shape from the parents, that no one at first sight would suppose them to belong to the same species. They are said to change their bills every year. Their usual food is sprats and sea-weed, which render the flesh of

the old birds extremely rank. They leave our coasts in the beginning of August.

The winter residence of this genus is but imperfectly known; it is probable that they live at sea in some more temperate climate, remote from land, forming those myriads of birds which are observed by mariners in many parts of the ocean. They are always found there at certain seasons, and are met with as near the pole as navigators have ever penetrated.

CURLEW.

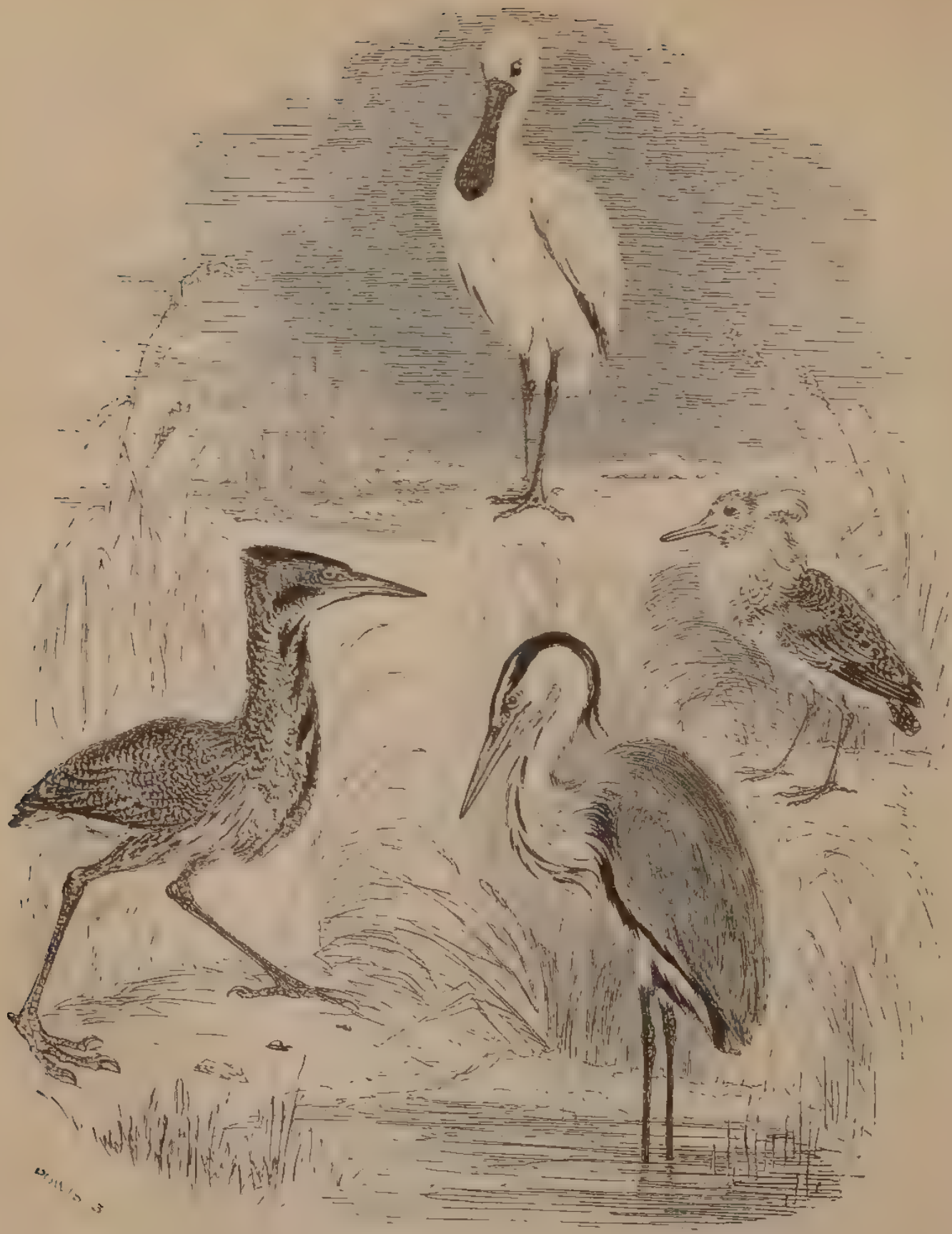
The Curlew, which belongs to the Snipe family, generally measures about two feet in length, the bill alone being about seven inches long. The head and neck are streaked with darkish and light brown; the feathers of the back and wings are nearly black in the middle,

and edged with pale rust and light grey; the under parts are a dull white. These birds differ considerably both in the shades of their plumage and in size, some of them weighing no more than twenty-two ounces and others nearly forty.

The Curlew is common on our coasts in winter, when it is gregarious, and feeds on small crabs, marine insects, and worms. In spring it retires inland, commonly to the large heathy and boggy moors in the more northern parts of the kingdom, to breed. It makes no nest, but deposits its eggs, four in number, of a pale olive colour spotted with brown, in a dry tuft of rushes or grass. The flesh of this bird is best in summer, when the bird feeds on frogs, worms, flies, and fresh-water insects: in winter it is rank and fishy.

In their flight, the Curlews often follow each other almost in a line, like Wild Ducks. As they stalk across a salt marsh they have a

stately appearance, and their cry is singularly wild and sonorous while they pursue their way along the shores. Though extremely shy when wild, the Curlew soon becomes docile in captivity. Montagu relates, that one which had been shot in the wing was enticed to eat bread and milk by putting worms in the mess. It was curious to observe how cautiously he avoided the mixture at first, carrying every worm to the pond and well washing before he swallowed it. He soon became used to the bread and milk, and got plump; and in a month he grew so tame that he would follow a person for a bit of bread or a small fish; he would also eat water-lizards, insects of every kind, and in defect of other food, barley with the Ducks. With his long bill he defended himself with courage, contending for food with the Shieldrakes, and even with the common Gull, and keeping his antagonist at a distance by the length of his weapon.



BITTERN.

SPOONBILL.

HERON.

RUFF.

BITTERN.

This bird, which belongs to the Heron family, is nearly as large as the common Heron, but more plump in the body. The crown of the head is covered with long black feathers; those of the neck, which are long and loose, the bird can raise and depress at pleasure: they are curiously spotted, waved, and striped, with black, whitish, and pale rust colour. The under parts are a dull pale yellow, clouded with dingy brown; and the plumage of the back and wings is marked with black zigzag lines, bars, and streaks, upon a ground shaded with reddish and yellow.

The Bittern is a shy, solitary bird, taking up its abode in marshes and moors, where it sits, commonly with head erect, among the reeds and rushes, from which it will not stir unless disturbed by the sportsman. About

sunset it sometimes rises and soars in a spiral direction to a great height, flying in the same heavy manner as the Heron, for which it might be mistaken, but for the loud singular cry which it utters from time to time while on the wing. This cry, however, is feeble when compared with the harsh hollow sound made in spring by the male, which is so loud that it may be heard at the distance of more than a mile. It is termed bumping or booming.

This sound has excited attention from the earliest times, and many attempts have been made to account for its formation. It has been likened to the lowing of a bull; whence the bird was called by old writers Botaurus; but Willughby asserts, from his own observation, that it is much more like the braying of an ass than the bellowing of a bull. Goldsmith's description, also from observation, is more minute, but is perhaps somewhat tinged with poetry. "Those," says he, "who have

walked in an evening by the sedgy sides of unfrequented rivers must remember a variety of notes from different water-fowl; the loud scream of the Wild Goose, the croaking of the Mallard, the whining of the Lapwing, and the tremulous neighing of the Jack-Snipe. But of all those sounds there is none so dismally hollow as the booming of the Bittern. It is impossible to give those who have not heard this evening call an idea of its solemnity. It is like the interrupted bellowing of a bull, but hollower and louder, and is heard at a mile's distance, as if issuing from some formidable being that resided at the bottom of the waters."

An examination of the structure of the windpipe in this bird proves that it possesses the peculiarity of a loose membrane, which can be filled with air and exploded at pleasure, by which means the bellowing noise made by the Bittern is believed to be produced; and not,

as it was formerly conjectured, by the aid of reeds or of water. Goldsmith expressly asserts that it is often heard when there are neither reeds nor waters to assist its sonorous invitations; and adds: "It cannot be, therefore, from its voracious appetites, but its hollow boom, that the Bittern is held in such detestation by the vulgar. I remember, in the place where I was a boy, with what terror this bird's note affected the whole village; they considered it as the presage of some sad event, and generally found or made one to succeed it. I do not speak ludicrously; but if any person in the neighbourhood died, they supposed it could not be otherwise, for the Night-Raven had foretold it; but if nobody happened to die, the death of a cow or a sheep gave completion to the prophecy."

The female makes an artless nest, composed chiefly of the withered stalks and leaves of the high coarse herbage among which it is placed,

and lays from four to six eggs of a greenish white.

The Bittern defends itself with great courage when attacked by the Buzzard or other birds of prey, and generally repulses such assailants. When wounded by the sportsman, it betrays no symptoms of fear, but eyes him with keen undaunted look, and when driven to extremity, will attack him furiously, wounding his legs or aiming at his eyes with its sharp bill. It feeds upon water animals, for which it watches for hours with great patience. Its flesh is accounted a delicacy.

HERON.

The birds of the Heron family are distinguished by a long, strong, sharp-pointed bill, long neck, half-naked thighs, and long legs, by which they are enabled to wade deep into

the water, where they stand motionless watching for small fish. The common Heron, though it measures about three feet in length, is so lean that it seldom weighs more than between three and four pounds. The crown of the head is white, bordered above the eyes by black lines, extending to the nape of the neck, where they join a long flowing pendent crest of the same colour. The fore part of the neck, in some white, in others pale ash, is spotted with a double row of black feathers. Those which fall over the breast and shoulders are long, loose, and of a grey colour, streaked with white. The plumage of the back is bluish, and the under parts are covered with a dirty white down.

The Heron is found in almost all fenny places, where it will stand motionless in the water for a long time, with its head laid back between the shoulders, and its bill hidden by the long feathers of the neck, in appear-

ance resembling the stump or root of a tree, waiting for its prey, which consists chiefly of eels and other fish, among which it makes great havoc, frogs, water-newts, and even field-mice. It will explore the country to a great distance in search of a convenient fishing spot, soaring in its journeys to a great height, and from time to time uttering a harsh cry while on the wing. In flying, the head is drawn back, and the outstretched legs seem, like the longer tails of some birds, to serve the purpose of a rudder.

The Heron, unlike most water-fowl, builds on trees. It has been observed in only one instance to build on the ground—in a small island in Scotland, where there was only one oak-tree, every bough of which was so loaded with nests, that many of the birds were forced by necessity thus to deviate from the habit of the species. The female lays from four to six pale greenish blue eggs. The body of the

nest is quite flat, formed, much in the manner of the Eagle's eyry, of sticks crossing one another, and supported upon the branches or between the forks of high trees. A shallow depression in the centre of the nest is lined with dry grass, rushes, feathers, wool, or some other soft material. All the species are social, nestling in large communities after the manner of Rooks, with which they are said to contract a friendship, probably in consequenee of their selecting breeding-places near those birds. A singular circumstance bearing upon this subject is related by Bewick, on the authority of Dr. Heysham of Carlisle. It occurred not long ago, at Dallam Tower, in Westmoreland, the seat of Daniel Wilson, Esq.

There were two groves adjoining to the park, one of which had for many years been resorted to by a number of Herons, which there built and bred: the other was one of the largest rookeries in the county. The two

tribes lived together for a long time without any disputes. At length, the trees occupied by the Herons, consisting of some very fine old oaks, were cut down, and the young perished by the fall of the timber. The parent birds immediately set about preparing new habitations in order to breed again; but as the trees in the neighbourhood of their old nests were only of a late growth, and not sufficiently high to secure them from the depredations of boys, they determined to effect a settlement in the rookery. The Rooks made an obstinate resistance; but, after a very violent contest, in the course of which many of the Rooks and some of their antagonists lost their lives, the Herons at last succeeded in their attempt, built their nests, and brought out their young. The next season the same contests took place, which terminated like the former by the victory of the Herons. Since that time peace seems to have been agreed

upon between them; the Rooks have relinquished possession of that part of the grove which the Herons occupy; the Herons confine themselves to those trees which they first seized upon, and the two species live together in as much harmony as they did before the quarrel.

At the time that hawking was a favourite diversion of the great in this country, laws were enacted expressly for the protection of the Heron. Not to know a Hawk from a Heronshaw, (the ancient name for a Heron,) became an adage when Heron-hawking was in high fashion; but it was afterwards corrupted into the vulgar saying, "not to know a Hawk from a *handsaw*." The discontinuance of hawking has caused the Heron to be disregarded. Though this bird was formerly estimated at thrice the value of a Goose, it is now considered as of little value, and rarely if ever brought to market. A few heronries still exist in different parts of the country.

The plumes of the Heron were formerly in high request in Europe for adorning the caps and helmets of the nobility, and they still form part of the splendid costume of a Knight of the Garter.

SPOONBILL.

The most remarkable feature of this bird is the bill, which is very long, broad, flat, and thin, widening at the extremity into a roundish form, not unlike a spoon, from which circumstance it derives its name. In figure it closely resembles the Heron tribe. The whole of the plumage is white; the feathers on the hinder part of the head are long and narrow, and form a sort of crest, which falls behind. The bird is about two feet eight inches in length.

The common residence of these birds is on

the sea-shores, or in the contiguous fens and swamps which are occasionally overflowed by the tide. Such situations they rarely quit; though they are sometimes seen on the banks of inland lakes or rivers. They feed on various kinds of small fishes and shell-fish, which they swallow whole, sometimes snatching them from other birds. They prey also on worms, insects, frogs, and other inhabitants of the slimy pools through which they wade, searching the mud with their curiously-constructed bills; and sometimes eat the weeds, grasses, and roots which grow in those boggy places.

The Spoonbill migrates northward in summer, and returns to the south on the approach of winter. Like the Herons, it builds its nest on the tops of high trees, lays three or four eggs, as large as a Hen's, white sprinkled with pale red spots, and is very noisy during the breeding season. The flesh, especially of the young birds, is said to resemble in flavour that of the Goose.

RUFF.

This curious bird belongs to the family of Sandpipers, which in haunts and manner of life nearly resembles that of the Snipes. Its distinguishing peculiarity from which it is named, is a singular, wide-spreading, variegated ruff, which in the breeding season grows out of the necks of the males, falling over the breast and shoulders, while a portion of it stands up at the back of the head like ears. What is remarkable in wild birds, it rarely happens that two of this species agree in the colour of their plumage; in some the appendage just described being black, in others black and yellow, and in others again white, rust-coloured, or barred with glossy violet, black, and white. The upper parts and the breast are generally marked with transverse bars and roundish glossy black spots on a

rusty-coloured ground; the under parts white; the tail brown, barred with black. The male does not acquire the ornament of his neck till the second season; he loses it in moulting about the end of June, and from that time until spring he is not to be distinguished from his mate, who is called the Reeve.

The Ruffs leave Great Britain in winter, returning in spring, and again taking up their abode in the fens in which they were bred. There they *hill*, as it is termed,—that is, they assemble upon a rising ground, contiguous to the breeding places, which are selected by the females, and fight, after the manner of the domestic Cock, till the turf is trodden quite bare by their obstinate strife. Of this peculiar habit of the birds, advantage is taken by the fowlers, who look out for these battle-fields. Ruffs feed chiefly by night, and repair to their battle-fields about the dawn of day, nearly all at the same time. The fowlers, therefore,

proceed to the spot before daybreak, spread their nets, place their decoy-birds, and rarely fail to secure all the Ruffs within reach. The birds thus caught are fattened for the table with bread and milk, hemp-seed, and sometimes boiled wheat; to which the addition of sugar will make them in a fortnight a lump of fat. In this state they sell for at least thirty shillings a dozen, and sometimes much higher. So addicted are they to fighting, that the feeders are obliged to shut them up in a dark room; for, the moment light is admitted, they attack one another, and fight till most of them are killed.

In the beginning of May, the female makes her nest in a dry tuft of grass, and lays four white eggs marked with rusty spots.

LAPWING.

The Lapwing is another species of the Sandpipers. It is about thirteen inches long, and weighs seven or eight ounces. From the back of the head, which is black, issues a tuft of narrow feathers, some of them four inches in length, and turning upward at the end. The sides of the head and neck are white, with a black streak above and below the eye; back of the neck pale brown; fore part and breast black; the back and wing coverts are dark green, with purple and blue reflections, and the under parts pure white.

This bird is a constant inhabitant of this country, and is everywhere well-known by its loud and incessant cry of *pee-wit*, which it repeats whilst on the wing, and which has been adopted for its name. It is a lively, active bird, sporting and frolicking in the air in all

directions and in a variety of attitudes; it remains long upon the wing, sometimes rising to a considerable height; runs along the ground very nimbly, and bounds from spot to spot with great agility. As it subsists chiefly on worms, it is forced to change its place in quest of food, and is frequently seen in great numbers by the sea-shores, where it obtains an abundant supply. When the bird finds one of those rolls of earth that are thrown up by the worms, it first gently removes the mould from the mouth of the hole, then strikes the ground at the side with its foot, and attentively waits the issue: the worm, alarmed by the shock, rises from its retreat, and is instantly seized. In the evening the Lapwings pursue a different plan, running along the grass and picking up the worms which then come forth invited by the coolness of the air.

The female makes no nest, but on a little dry grass hastily scraped together she lays

four olive-coloured eggs spotted with black. She sits about three weeks, and the young run very soon after they are hatched. She manifests the strongest attachment to her offspring. Instead of waiting the arrival of enemies at her nest, she boldly sallies forth to meet them. When as near as she dare venture, she rises from the ground with a loud screaming voice, as if just flushed from sitting, though probably at the time not within a hundred yards of her nest. She then flies round the invaders with great apparent anxiety, whining and screaming, striking at them with her wings, and sometimes fluttering as if wounded. To complete the deception, she becomes more clamorous the further she gets from her nest; and if very near to it she appears altogether unconcerned. On the approach of dogs, she flies heavily at a little distance before them, as if maimed, still clamorous and bold, but never moving towards the spot where her

young are. The dogs pursue in expectation every moment of seizing the parent, and thus lose the young; for the cunning bird, having drawn them to a proper distance, flies rapidly away to the astonishment of her pursuers.

When tamed, the Lapwing is extremely useful in clearing gardens of snails and worms. Bewick gives an account of one, which not only shows the familiar nature of this bird, but also the art with which it makes friends of animals that are in general hostile to every species of the feathered tribe. Two of these birds, given to the Rev. Mr. Carlyle, vicar of Newcastle, were put into a garden where one of them soon died. The other continued to pick up such food as he could find till winter deprived him of the usual supply. He then gradually drew nearer and nearer to the house, till at length he began to utter his cry of pee-wit to obtain admittance into a back kitchen. He soon became more familiar; as the winter

advanced, he began to venture into the kitchen, but with great caution, as that was already inhabited by a dog and cat. The Lapwing, however, soon contrived to gain the friendship of those animals so completely, that as soon as it grew dark he would regularly resort to the fire-side, and pass the evening and night with those two companions, sitting close by them and partaking of the comforts of that warm situation. On the return of spring he forsook the house and confined himself to the garden; but on the approach of winter he again sought shelter with his old friends, who received him very cordially. He was at last choked with something which he had picked up from the floor. During his residence in the house, crumbs of wheaten bread, which he preferred to anything else, were his principal food.

Both the flesh and the eggs of the Lapwing are reckoned great delicacies for the table.

AVOCET.

This singular-looking bird does not much exceed the Lapwing in the bulk of its body, though, from the length of its legs, it is much taller, and measures nearly two feet. Its most striking feature is its black bill, about three inches and a half long, which looks not unlike two flat flexible pieces of whalebone, curving upward to the tip. The whole of the plumage of the Avocet is white, variegated with black; but, as in most of the piebald birds, the patches of colour are not placed alike in every individual. The thighs, which are naked, as well as the legs and feet, are of a fine pale blue; the feet are much webbed.

The Avocet is a migratory bird, and is common in winter about the lakes, marshes, and mouths of rivers in the south of England. They then assemble in small parties, search-

ing in the mud and sand for worms, spawn, and marine insects, which they scoop out with their long bills. In their motions they are lively, alert, volatile, not remaining long on one spot; wading about near the shore, up to the belly in water, and sometimes swimming. When a flock is disturbed, they fly with extended neck and legs over the head of the intruder, making a shrill noise, and uttering all the time a yelping cry of *twit, twit.*

In the breeding season these birds assemble in large flocks in the fens. The female lays two white eggs, tinged with green, and marked with large black spots. When frightened from her nest, she counterfeits lameness, like the Lapwing.

GULL.

The Gulls form a numerous family dispersed over every quarter of the world. They assemble together in mixed flocks composed of various species, and greatly enliven the beach and rocky cliffs by their irregular movements, while their shrill cries are often nearly drowned by the roaring of the waves. In these birds the bill is strong and straight, but bent downward at the point, and the lower mandible has an angular projection on the under side. The head is large, the wings long, and the body covered with a great quantity of down and feathers, which gives these birds an appearance of bulk disproportionate to their weight. The legs are small, naked above the knees, and the feet webbed. All the species of Gulls are represented as thievish, greedy, and gluttonous; the stronger robbing the weaker, and

devouring indiscriminately whatever falls in their way, whether fresh or putrid.

The common Gull, Sea-Gull, or Sea-Mew, generally measures about seventeen inches. The plumage of the upper parts is of a fine bluish grey, streaked with dusky spots on the back of the head and neck; and the under parts are pure white. The quill feathers are black and white. This is the most numerous of all the Gulls that frequent the British shores, and is seen in numerous flocks continually screaming. They frequent the mouths of the larger rivers, picking up the animal substances which are cast on shore or float down with the tide. For this kind of food they watch with a quick eye, and it is curious to observe how such as are near the breakers will run splashing towards the summit of the wave to catch the object of their pursuit. At particular seasons this species also resorts to the inland parts of the country, feeding upon worms,

slugs, and the like; and it will also follow the plough to pick up the grubs of the cockchafer, like the Rooks, with which it associates in severe weather. The jelly-like substance which is sometimes met with in the fields, and is called star-shot, from the vulgar notion that it is produced by the meteors known by the name of shooting stars, is believed to be the remains of half-digested worms, discharged by the Gulls from their overloaded stomachs.

The Gull breeds on rocky cliffs, laying two eggs, nearly as large as a Hen's, of an olive brown colour, marked with dark reddish blotches. Some persons who live near the sea eat this as well as other species of Gulls; but they are obliged to wash them in vinegar or to bury them in fresh mould for a day, to purify them from the rank taste which they would otherwise have.

Gulls are found in such multitudes on some

of the rocky islands along our coasts, that the whole surface of the ground is covered with their dung, and their eggs are collected by the inhabitants in prodigious numbers. In some places this occupation is attended with dangers that might well deter the most adventurous spirit; but want excites the ingenuity and activity of man, and spurs him on to exertions that appear to surpass his powers. To seemingly inaccessible retreats in the sides of those stupendous rocks which border some parts of our northern shores, secured by awful precipices above and below, myriads of Gulls and other sea-fowl resort for the purpose of breeding; and there they are seen sporting and flitting from crag to crag. The rocky islet of St. Kilda, on the western coast of Scotland, for example, is one of their favourite haunts. Its surface is about three-quarters of a mile above the level of the sea, which it overhangs in a most terrific manner. Here the fowlers form

parties to pursue their perilous employment. When a precipice is to be assailed from below, they provide poles five or six yards long with a hook at one end; fixing one of these in the girdle of one of the party, his companions, in a boat or on the projection of a cliff, assist him to ascend until he has obtained a firm footing. When this is accomplished, he draws up the others by a rope, and then another man is forwarded by means of the pole to a higher station. Sometimes the person in the highest situation holds another suspended by a rope, and directs his course to the spot where the birds have placed their nests; but it often happens that the man holding the rope has not a footing sufficiently secure, and then both inevitably perish.

Many precipices, however, are so abrupt as not to be accessible from below. In this case a rope eighty or a hundred fathoms in length is provided; this one of the fowlers fastens

round his waist and between his legs so as when suspended to support him in a sitting posture. The rope is held by five or six persons on the top, and it slides upon a piece of wood laid so as to project beyond the edge of the precipice. The man is thus gradually let down, until he can reach the habitations of the sea-fowl. The descent and friction of the rope often cause loose stones to tumble around him; and, though the head of the fowler is covered with a kind of helmet or some other safeguard, many are killed by accidents of this kind. The inexperienced are often seized with a giddiness on seeing themselves suspended from these tremendous heights; but one who is accustomed to the business swings himself about with wonderful dexterity, directs his attack against that part of the rock which seems to promise the greatest success, strikes with his staff the game as it issues from the holes, occasionally disengages himself from

the rope to explore the caverns in the rock, and, when he has obtained sufficient booty, gives the signal to his companions, who draw him up; after which a supper on the coarse flesh of the Sea-Gull compensates these hardy adventurers for the dangers and fatigues of the day.

THE END.

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